

LINEWATERS' GAZETTE

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February 24, 2000

BREAK-IN AT THE COOP

The Coop was broken into Sunday night after all members had left. As we do not keep money in the building, the losses to theft were extremely small: three Radio Shack walkie talkies.

By Linda Wheeler, General Coordinator

The intruders cut the lock on the gate of the schoolyard which adjoins our property, then scaled the back of our building. They cut our outside phone wires. We found a heavy-duty knotted climbing rope tied to the cooling equipment on our back roof with the lower end reaching into the schoolyard next door, probably for a quick escape. The intruders then ripped apart a second-floor skylight, pried loose the iron bars inside the skylight and dropped into an office. The room into which they dropped contained the hub of our phone system and a bank of computer network connections. They cut, disconnected or ripped out all of them.

In order to enter an office not accessible from their entry point, they broke

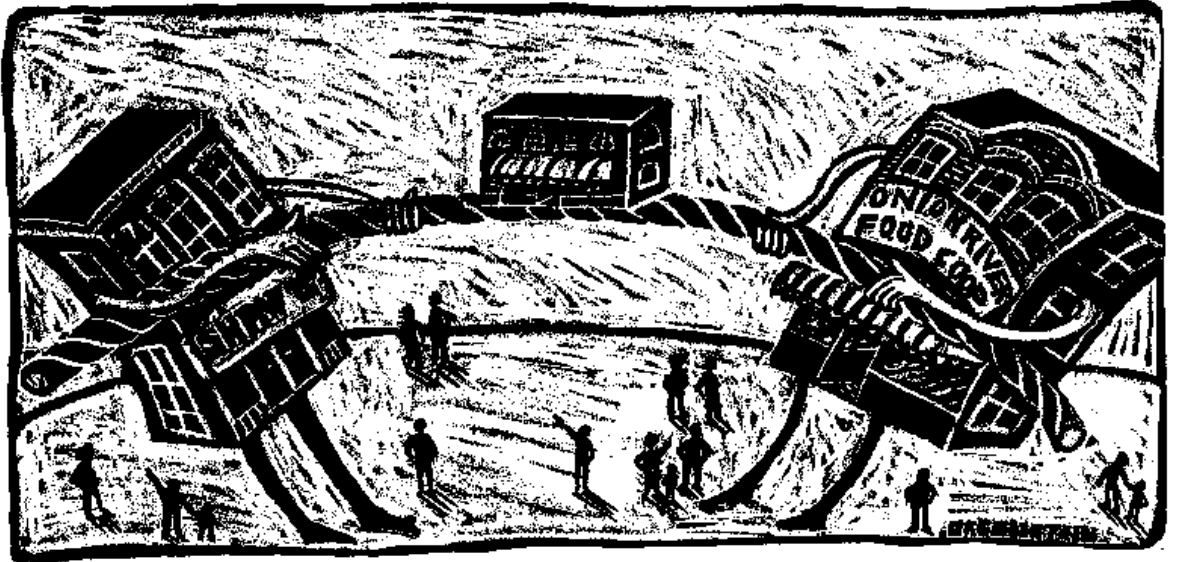
through a wall. Once they had entered that office, they had access to the video monitor. In addition to cutting the cables, they were able to remove the video tape on which they might have been recorded.

Weekend nights are a typical time for robberies in supermarkets because thieves expect to find a safe with heavy weekend receipts. We do not have a safe and do not keep cash in our building. We were therefore reinforced in our thinking, supported by the police, that we have a cash handling system that suits our needs well.

Our insurance company will cover the damages, so our expenses are limited to the deductible.

Members and staff were seriously inconvenienced by the lack of telephones on

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“ONION” WINS IN VERMONT

FOOD COOP WILL BECOME BURLINGTON'S BIG STORE

By R. C. Archibald

It had all the trappings of a political campaign.

Mailboxes were filled with fliers. Town meetings were called. Every voter got a telephone call urging them to cast a ballot.

And in the end the Onion River Food Coop of Burlington, Vermont has won the great supermarket war of ski country. It will build a new, 15,000-square-foot store downtown that will serve as the city's primary food store.

But to get to this point meant a battle that pitted the food coop against a supermarket chain, Shaw's, that also wanted to build a store downtown to fill the void left by the closing of the Price Chopper supermarket in April 1999.

Although 350 miles away, the battle is relevant to Brooklyn, where the Park Slope Food Coop is planning to expand and competes with chain stores like Key Food on Seventh Avenue for some business.

The Onion River Food Coop operates a 3,500-square-foot store. But the closing of the Price Chopper presented an opportunity to expand, said Ned Flinn, Onion River's manager.

The coop responded to the city's request for proposals and drew up a plan for a 15,000-square-foot store that, apart from the natural and organic food staples, would also include conventional items like Cheerios and Grape Nuts, Flinn said. Adding such items, Flinn said, would address community concerns that not everybody would be interested in organic food, which by and large costs more than standard goods.

Meanwhile, Shaw's, which serves all of New England, drafted its own proposal for a 45,000-square-foot store. The City Council approved the Onion River plan 12-2 in December but a petition drive forced the issue to a referendum that was held January 25.

Shaw's supporters said the size would allow for a wider range of offerings than a coop and, if the city of 38,000 residents was going to have only one supermarket, it may as well be something traditional. Shaw's asserted its food was cheaper but Flinn said the claim was made based on comparing conventional items against organic.

"It was apples and oranges," he said. "Our standard items were cheaper than theirs."

Shaw's also canvassed voters by telephone, printed fliers distributed to every household.

"The mailing was warm and fuzzy," Flinn said. "They had a big photo of the original store in 1897. They were trying to say we are not a corporate entity owned by a big British company."

The company also tried to rally residents at town meetings. The Friends of Shaw's Committee, a community group, urged people to vote for a store with a more traditional offering.

In the end, however, not enough voters supported Shaw's to overrule the council. Shaw's needed two-thirds of the voters, but got 60 percent, Flinn said.

The new store is scheduled to be completed by June 2001.

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Next General Meeting on February 29

The General Meeting of the Park Slope Food Coop is held on the last Tuesday of each month. The next General Meeting will be Tuesday, February 29, 7:00 p.m. at the Congregation Beth Elohim Temple House (Garfield Temple), 274 Garfield Pl.

The agenda is printed inside this issue (see index below) and is posted at the Coop Community Corner. For more information about the GM and about Coop governance, please see the center of this issue.

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Coop Event Highlights

Thur, Feb 24 Blood Drive, 6:30 p.m.

Thur, Mar 2 Food Class—Sea Vegetable, 7:30 p.m.

Fri, Mar 17 Good Coffeehouse—Steal the Donut, 8:00 p.m.

Sun, Mar 26 Family Concert—Imagination Workshop Band, 3:30 p.m.

Look for additional information about these and other events in this issue.

"Onion" Wins

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As in Vermont, prices and expansion are high on the minds of many Park Slope Food Coop members.

Recent price comparison surveys show that items at the Coop usually are cheaper than supermarket chains like Pathmark, which carry limited

organic goods if any. "Big box" stores such as Costco and BJ's tend to beat the Coop, but of course they only offer mega-quantities and a limited selection. (And like the Coop, they specialize in long lines.)

The city has no connection to the Park Slope Coop's expansion plans but it, too, has generated a lot of talk among members.

The design, which would

use the adjacent building the Coop bought last year, calls for 60 percent more shelf space and wider aisles.

Joe Holtz, General Coordinator, said the Coop hopes to receive bids from contractors in mid-April to determine the costs of the expansion. Construction could take up at least another year or so, but it won't be known for sure until the bids come in, he said. ■

Whole Foods Bans GE Foods From Their Private Label

By Laurie Essig

The controversy over genetically engineered foods at the Coop entered a new phase this month when Whole Foods, the Austin-based grocery store chain, announced that it would stop using genetically modified



ingredients in any of the products sold under its private label. Wild Oats, the Denver-based chain, quickly followed suit. Up until now, the Coop has defended its policy of selling genetically engineered (GE) foods as necessary given the difficulty of finding adequate substitutes for them. That means that anytime you purchase certain products that are not organic, you are probably getting genetically engineered foods. These products include canola oil, radicchio, corn or corn oil, papaya, potato, soy, squash and tomato. In terms of



processed foods that the Coop sells, this includes many canned tomato products, most vegetarian proteins and any breads, chips, or crackers that use "vegetable oil." According to one report from the Environmental Committee, the Coop sells literally hundreds of genetically engineered products.

Genetically engineered foods may pose a danger to humans as well as the environment. Little research has been done on the health risks posed to humans by genetically engineered food. Some of the genetically engineered foods have genes from other

foods spliced into them. So, for instance, you might bite into a tomato and actually be eating genetic material from a fish. Studies show that allergens can be passed through foods in this way and thus put people with allergies at risk. Genetically engineered foods may also have disastrous effects on the environment. One study showed that Monarch butterflies were adversely affected after genetically engineered crops were introduced into their domain. The crops in question had Bt spliced into them. Bt is a naturally occurring pesticide that is now



spliced into the very genetic make-up of corn, cotton and potatoes. Not only might Bt harm certain species of insects, but many environmentalists believe that it could create a problem of "superpests," insects that have ingested enough Bt to be immune to it. Such superpests would seriously threaten organically-grown crops, which rely heavily on Bt.

Although many in the business of "biotechnology" (an industry euphemism for genetic engineering) counter that these products will feed more people with fewer pesticides, there is no evidence



that that is happening. In fact, one study cited on the Greenpeace webpage suggested that farmers are using more



pesticides on genetically engineered crops. Last month a federal judge ruled that the US Environmental Protection Agency has sixty days to prove that genetically engineered products are safe for humans and the environment or risk losing a lawsuit brought against it by the Center for Food Safety.

Now the PSFC must decide whether to take a stand against genetically engineered foods. Such a stand might involve labeling any foods that are likely to contain genetically engineered products and even banning many of those products from our shelves. In any event, it is time for the membership to make a decision. Estelle Epstein has submitted an agenda item for the General Meeting to discuss the role the Coop might play in the struggle to ban genetically engineered foods. She hopes that it can be scheduled for the March GM. Meanwhile, there is plenty of room for members to make their voices heard on this issue, whether by calling the coordinators or writing letters to the *Gazette*. ■

GM Agenda Item:

Employment Policy

The Coop's Hourly Employment Policy pertains to all employees who are paid by the hour such as the Receiving, Office and Bookkeeping Coordinators. The policy covers wages, hours, scheduling, holidays, sick time, vacations, health insurance, lunch policy, pension, hiring, firing, supervision, and grievance and complaint proceedings.

The policy was originally

Break In

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Monday—the busiest phone day of the week—and much of Tuesday. Unfortunately people calling from outside got a ring signal but no answer so that it seemed that we were just not answering our phones. With the loss of phone service, we lost e-mail, our fax and the ability to transmit the bulk of our orders for the week. Our telephone contractor was very prompt and worked all day Monday. Bell Atlantic was not particularly responsive to our emergency need Monday, and we had to wait until Tuesday for cable repair. As I write this, the phones are being reconnected one by one, and the necessary reprogramming is almost complete.

The cost to the Coop in staff time has been signifi-

cant. Several of us devoted virtually all of our time in these first two days to reconnecting networks, securing the building and arranging for necessary repairs. Others of us attempted to carry on business as usual without necessary phone, fax and computer access. The break-in created extra work for all members of the staff. Nor has the work ended.

We still have to work on improvements to our security systems to prevent further occurrences. We have received valuable advice from the police, from our video security system people and from our insurance company.

We especially appreciate the understanding and patience of the members who were directly affected, and we are grateful to others for their generous sharing of cell phones. ■

GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 7:00 P.M.

- Items will be taken up in the order given.
- Times in parentheses are suggestions.
- More information on each item may be available at the entrance table at the meeting. We ask members to please read the materials available between 7:00 & 7:15 p.m.

Location:

Congregation Beth Elohim Social Hall
(Garfield Temple)
274 Garfield Place at Eighth Avenue.

Item #1: Agenda Committee Election (15 minutes)

Election: "One two-year term is open. Nominations are being accepted now and will be accepted on the floor of the GM." —submitted by the Agenda Committee

Item #2: Hourly Employment Policy (40 minutes)

Proposal: "To authorize the General Coordinators to amend the existing Hourly Employment Policy as needed." —submitted by the General Coordinators

Item #3: Added Value Membership Cards (35 minutes)

Proposal: "That the Coop implement a discount program at participating local businesses for Coop members." —submitted by the Marketing Committee

FEBRUARY

By the General Coordinators

ment to the policy by the General Meeting.

Since these elements are part of the cost of the entire compensation package, we propose that the General Coordinators be authorized to amend these benefits as needed (as we do with pay scale) in order to more quickly and easily respond to the needs both of the hourly employees and of the Coop. ■



ILLUSTRATION BY VALERIE TRUCCHIA

REPORT TO MEMBERS

Help Needed for Critical Loan Drive

By Joe Holtz, General Coordinator

You will soon see a table in the Coop with members and coordinators soliciting member loans in support of the development of our new space at 784 Union St. Member loans have always been an important method of funding growth and improvements to our building, and they will be again for the current project.

We expect to begin construction in June. The Renovation Committee is working with the architect, food store planner, environmental advisor and refrigeration and equipment consultants to complete the plan that will go out to general contractors for bids in March.

In April, the committee will select the best bid. At that point, we will know the projected cost of the project. In May, the National Cooperative Bank will determine how much money they will lend us based on an appraisal of the three buildings, how much we have in the bank and what they think we can afford in

monthly mortgage payments.

Member loans support the Coop in several ways. Not only do loans bring money into our bank account, they are an indication of the direct support of the membership for their Coop. The NCB has looked at that strength in the past when considering mortgage and development loans. The member loan program also supports our members directly by allowing us to keep the required investment for individual members as low as possible while obtaining needed capital funds from those members who have more money.

In addition, loans to the Coop made by members cost the Coop less than loans from a bank, yet the members who make the loans earn a higher rate of interest than they would get by depositing the money in a bank. The bank encourages us to get as many loans as possible from our members. The more member loans we get, the less we'll have to borrow at the bank's

higher interest rates.

Why Now?

Member loans will be most effective if they come in *before* we finalize the development loan with the bank.

If we don't have our funding in line by early May, the Renovation Committee will have to try to pare down the project. The committee has been conscious throughout of the cost of the project. Cutting back would be unfortunate because it would mean that we would have to give up on needed features.

How You Can Help

Of course, you can make a loan to the Coop. However, whether you can make a loan or not, you can contribute to this effort by helping us staff the loan table and spread the word.

Workslot credit will be available. Please help with this two-month campaign from mid-March to mid-May. If you are interested, please contact the office. ■

Why We Still Don't Have Scanners

By Laurie Essig

Two years ago the Coop ordered scanners. We intended to have the scanners up and running by December of 1998. Instead, in February of 2000, the Coop is still spending a lot of time and energy (and of course money in terms of labor and opportunity costs) on getting the scanners to work. One of the reasons that the scanners still are not operational is that the software the Coop bought, from a company called Trimax, did not do what it was supposed to do. For instance, Trimax claimed the software could handle up to 200 suspend/resume transactions at a time. In fact, the software could only handle eight such transactions. The problem is that the Coop system of checking out can create a line with more than eight persons in it. Thus the software needed to be able to suspend more than eight transactions after they had been rung up at the checkout stations, then resume them again when those people made it to the cash registers. Unfortunately, the suspend/resume problem was somewhat unique to the Coop because of our bifurcated system of checking out and paying. So Trimax took until December 1999 to rewrite the software so it could do what they promised it would.

Then the new version of the software created another computer problem. Originally, each computer station, whether checkout or cash register, would be able to

continue functioning even if the network went down. Then when the network was working again, the individual stations could share their data with the network. Because this is a problem for all the stores using Trimax's software, General Coordinator Joe Holtz feels optimistic that Trimax will fix the problem much more quickly than they dealt with the suspend/resume issue. Meanwhile, the representative from Century Data Systems, which sold the scanners to the Coop, advised the Coop against using the system until each station can function independently of the network.

The other software problem that needs to be addressed has to do with bar codes and items sold by the case. Because the bar codes on the outside of many cases are for a single item, a checkout person could easily make the mistake of charging for one item rather than the entire case. The coordinators want the computer to flash "quantity required" whenever such items are scanned into the system. That way the checkout worker will be forced to think for a second about whether s/he is charging for one or many items.

Despite the remaining problems, the Coop is proceeding as if everything will be operational soon. The tentative plan is to install the new, computerized cash registers on Sunday night, March 5. The checkout lines will remain the same for several more weeks. The new cash



PICTURES BY NICKA

registers will work like the older, "dumb" machines until the scanners are up and running. In the meantime, there is still a lot of work to be done. Not all the bar codes have been entered into the computer and some bar codes need to be generated

for products that do not have them. Training in the new system will begin for at least one or two people on each squad. The Coop staff has a target date of April 10 to have the scanners up and running. Yet they admit that finding the time to get all this done is

going to be difficult, especially since the new building takes up so much of their time. So the scanners are still not working, but they may be soon, if all the remaining software problems can be solved and the tasks completed. ■

Help Spread the Word!

Let everyone know about your Coop!

Are you a realtor, a health practitioner? Do you have an office or a store? Do you have a place to distribute our new bright green "business cards"? Can you carry a few in your wallet for those times when you tell others about the best place to shop in Brooklyn! Take as many as you would like from the box at the exit door or from the office. (And coming soon: the Coop's new trifold flyer.)

Save \$\$\$ on produce & groceries!

Find out more about the

Park Slope Food Coop

732 Union Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215

The Park Slope Food Coop

2-4th floor workslot every 4 weeks you can purchase groceries at only 20% above wholesale! We have over 200 varieties of organically and conventionally grown produce and a wide selection of groceries including off-brand and specialty products. Our prices are the lowest in Brooklyn and we have a membership of 1200 people and more in Sunday. We have a personal touch, we're open 7 days a week.

Food Allergies

By Marjorie Ordene

When most people think of allergies, they think of the sneezing, runny noses and watery, itchy eyes associated with allergy to pollen, animals, or dust. However, there is another type of allergy which, though common, is much more insidious. This is food allergy. I'm not referring to the obvious kind of food allergy we all know—where someone breaks out in hives or has difficulty breathing after eating shrimp or peanuts. I'm talking about the more subtle kind of allergy that occurs so long after eating the offending food—at intervals of hours to days—that cause and effect are not readily apparent. Symptoms vary widely, from typical allergy reactions like dark circles under the eyes, constant throat clearing and rashes to vague and generalized symptoms like brain-fog, fatigue and depression.

A four-year-old girl developed the habit of constantly clearing her throat. At the same time her mother noticed pink circles under her eyes. The pediatrician referred them to an allergist who did 16 scratch tests to various foods and inhalants, all negative. Finally, the parents decided to do an elimination challenge diet, in which they removed all suspect foods for a period of time to see if symptoms resolved (elimination) and then added them back one at a time to see if symptoms reappeared (challenge). In this case the parents were suspicious of

calcium-supplemented foods because they were a recent addition to the child's diet and so, besides the usual offenders of wheat, eggs and citrus, they eliminated calci-

um-enriched juice and soy milk. (Dairy had already been eliminated, hence the calcium supplements.) Within a week the throat clearing ceased and the circles disappeared. Adding back citrus, egg and wheat had no ill effect. Therefore, the parents concluded it was the calcium. (Strictly speaking, they should have added it back as well, but they were afraid of provoking the symptoms.)

Renee was having daily incapacitating headaches. When I questioned her about her diet, one thing stood out—she consumed bread and cheese daily. When I suggested she might be allergic to them and should eliminate them from her diet, she exclaimed, "How can I do without bread and

cheese? What will I eat?" To me this was proof enough, but Renee remained unconvinced. I did a skin test

(found in bread) and mold (found in cheese) and within ten minutes they became red and itchy. For the next three weeks, Renee did without her bagel and her Brie and she had no headaches. Then

she ate pizza. The next day she had a whopping headache. Since pizza contains both bread and cheese, it was impossible to say which was the culprit. Renee resumed the elimination diet. She seems to be able to eat bread without dire consequences but so far, every time she eats cheese, the headaches return.

Irene was suffering from chronic vaginal burning. Yet whenever the gynecologist examined her, no infection was to be found. Her doctor suggested food allergies as the cause. Through a combination of allergy and elimination challenge testing, it was determined that she was allergic to vinegar. Whenever Irene ate foods like mayonnaise, catsup, salad dressings or marinades, she had the burning; when she avoided them, she was fine. These three exam-

ples illustrate cases where the offending foods were relatively easy to identify and eliminate. However, there are many cases where even on an extensive elimination diet, the symptoms do not go away completely. Moreover, even if they do subside considerably, such a restrictive diet would be unacceptable both from a practical and a nutritional point of view.

Susan is a 30-year-old woman who had such severe eczema that she had to wear long sleeves and skirts at all times. After trying everything from antihistamines to steroid creams to vitamins, she finally turned her attention to diet. Off grains, dairy, citrus, eggs and soy, her skin improved to the point where she could discontinue the steroid creams. However,

she still had severe eczema over much of her body. I advised her to undergo a special kind of desensitization involving very low (homeopathic) doses of antigens. Before her first injection I had her clean out her gut with antifungal and antibacterial agents and follow a special vitamin and mineral program. Then for three days surrounding the shot, she could eat only hypo-allergenic foods such as lamb, fish, sweet potatoes and lettuce. She had to avoid perfumes, smoke, cosmetics and lotions. After three shots, given at intervals of two or more months, the eczema was gone. This treatment, which is much safer than conventional immunotherapy, is useful for many immune and food-related illnesses ranging from autoimmune diseases like rheumatoid arthritis and ulcerative colitis, to hyperactivity to asthma and hay fever.

When you think about it, it's not surprising that people develop food allergies. Food is after all a foreign substance that we take into our bodies. If everything goes right, then the food stays in the alimentary canal, separated from the bloodstream by the intestinal wall, until it has been completely digested into amino acids, sugars and fatty acids, which are no longer foreign. Only then are they absorbed into the bloodstream. However, when digestion is incomplete or when the mucosal barrier is leaky, undigested food particles bearing foreign proteins are presented to the immune system and there the trouble begins. It is for this reason that the first step in treating food allergies is to repair the faulty digestion and leaky gut that caused it in the first place. ■



ILLUSTRATION BY JANICE FRIED

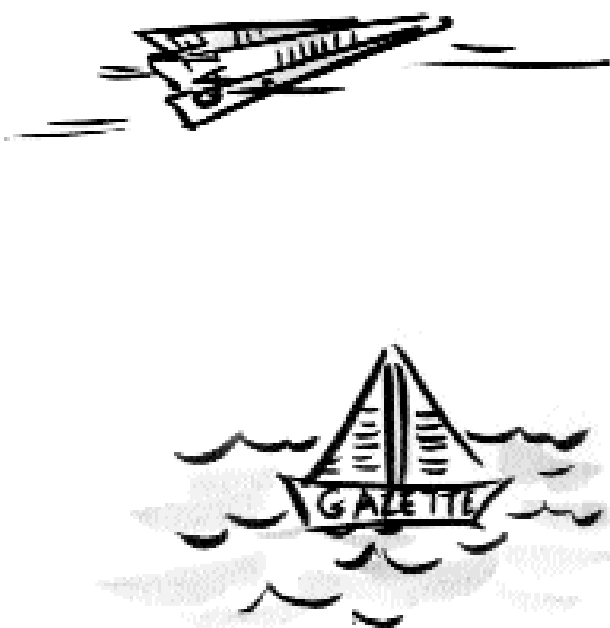


Ellen Weinstat is happy to announce the birth of her grandson:

GENNARO BOSAMONTE, III ("JJ")

January 23, 10:33 p.m.
6 lbs. 8 oz.

Baby and proud parents, Rachel Marlin and Jerry Bosamonte, are doing fine!



Picture Takers Wanted

Over 4000 members have had their new digital cards made. Now, in order to reach the remaining 2000, we are beginning to provide weekend hours for picture taking.

If you are interested in doing a shift taking members' pictures on the weekend, please call the office. We will discuss training and your schedule. FTOP work credit is available.