

PROPOSAL TO REINSTATE MEMBER LABOR WILL NOT GO TO A VOTE

September 11, 2020

DEAR COOP COMMUNITY,

At the August GM I tried to present a proposal to restore voluntary member labor for discussion. The response to my presentation was so overwhelmingly negative that I have decided not to request a vote. But I do want to address a few points as they bear on the state of our Coop.

First, although the General Coordinators knew about my proposal and I had written to them about the matter several times, and although I have had a cooperative relationship with them for many years, including as Committee Chair on the Loan Committee, they did not tell me that they intended to present the return to member labor as an apparent *fait accompli*, during their report at the beginning of the GM. I believe that there had been no earlier public proposal from the GCs to restore member labor. Had the GCs informed me of their intentions, I would have withdrawn my proposal.

Second, several comments suggested that my motives for wanting to restore member labor were political. One person explicitly said I was “screaming like Trump’s girlfriend.” Ouch. Without trotting out my progressive *bona fides*, I assert that people can legitimately disagree on which precautions are science-based and which are fear-based. Contrary to comments during the meeting, I had thought a lot about the issue, discussed it with other Coop stakeholders (staff and members), and spent considerable time reviewing health research and guidelines. I was motivated entirely by caring about the cooperative model and financial viability. I am concerned that liberals are becoming as reactionary as the right. I hope we are not going to meet disagreement with disparagement, either within our Coop or in the broader community. I tried to present as coherently as I could, within the limits of the Zoom meeting, a response to whatever concerns I could anticipate. I don’t think anyone should be dismissed or mocked for suggesting alternative approaches. That does not strengthen us, it weakens us.

Third, the Chair of the meeting said that the Chair committee members are not receiving work credit. He also noted that they are working more than average to make the GM happen. I think that the Coop should grant work credit to members who provide essential functions, such as running the GM and the *Linewaiters' Gazette*. For essential functions we should not depend on members' willingness to donate their time.

Finally, I had requested that my presentation be made available, but I don't think that happened. Unfortunately, because my time was cut short and I had technical difficulties with my Zoom connection, the presentation was rushed, and I could not introduce myself, respond to questions, or provide clarifications. I am a public school special ed teacher; I used to be a social scientist; I have been a member of the Coop for about 25 years, and I was the chair of the Revolving Loan Committee. If anyone is interested, here is the link to the presentation:

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1UdZdpijqqvhxaK_06NjrTyqeOM8jAvnQSe-ablaLbIKc/edit?usp=sharing

*In Cooperation,
Rachel Porter*