

MEMBER LABOR

April 19, 2022

Letters to the Editor



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

To the Editor:

Required member labor is the basis of the Coop's identity—neither state supported nor profit making. We share responsibility and benefits in an equitable manner. Equity means fairness, not uniformity.

In the “Membership Manual” (2020 edition on the website), there’s an explanation of the member labor system that has evolved over 47 years. Not only has member labor in squads with member leaders enabled us to keep prices moderate, we have created a community that commits to responsibility and respect.

An unpredictable interruption hit the Coop hard, with Covid-19 threatening everyone. Quickly, workers were hired to keep the store open. There was no time to consult.

Organization of member labor is now being thoroughly changed. I propose a vote at an upcoming GM on how members favor organizing member labor.

I propose predominantly returning to regularly scheduled squads with member leaders.

Meet at the library or the park to improve the proposal before a GM vote.

Members decide.

Susan Metz

IN PRAISE OF JEROME

April 19, 2022

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Dear Food Coop,

I just wanted to write a letter regarding Jerome, who is a Receiving Coordinator. I have now worked on several shifts with Jerome and he is absolutely phenomenal. At the beginning of the shift he provides a good introduction of what we are to do, and what we have at our disposal—like gloves. He takes care to match people with appropriate Coop tasks. When I told him that I was physically unable to do a task due to in-

jury there were no questions asked. On my recent shift, he paired me with a new Coop member and he assigned us to a variety of tasks so the new member could get a sense of the vastness of what we carry. He suggested that I show her around, and we went on a pilgrimage to the basement—this is where you cut cheese, here is the yogurt cooler, this is where the carrots live.

Throughout the shifts I have worked with Jerome, I have found him to be an excellent communicator. In a world of negativity, Jerome is a bright spot. We are fortunate to have Jerome working with us. Thank you.

David Meltzer



FROM THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE EDUCATION SQUAD

April 19, 2022

DEAR EDITORS,

The International Trade Education Squad (ITES) has been working with other trade justice and human rights groups throughout the pandemic to push for changes in international trade arrangements to enable the making of vaccines across the world. From November 30–December 3 the World Trade Organization is meeting where a vote will take place to suspend intellectual property monopolies for COVID-19 vaccines, tests and treatments. Already more than 100 nations support a temporary, COVID-specific waiver of WTO Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) rules.

The White House said it would support the TRIPS waiver, but governments of the European Union are currently blocking it. Our government needs to push the European Union to support vaccinating and treating the world so further SARS variants will not render the existing shots and treatment modalities we have ineffective.

Join us in calling on our government to:

1. Cooperate with South Africa, India and other waiver proponents to speedily produce a draft WTO TRIPS waiver text and use all means available to press the European Union to end their opposition and secure swift passage of a comprehensive waiver agreement.
2. Leverage the U.S. government's past public investments, existing legal authorities and considerable equities to make vaccine firms transfer technology to capable and qualified producers around the world.
3. Launch and fund a global manufacturing plan to increase and democratize vaccine production in hubs worldwide.

Thank you,

Helen Beichel



CHRONICLE OF MEMBER LABOR DEBATE AVAILABLE

April 19, 2022

Congratulations to us for holding our unique enterprise together through the multiple crises of these terrible, troubled times. Gratitude for the effort and forgiveness for the errors, especially to the General Coordinators, and all who stepped up to the tasks.

At the Nov 30 General Meeting we will have voted on a motion I presented to return to required member labor on stable, regularly scheduled squads with member leaders; and to begin orienting those member squad leaders now to be ready to transition back to the traditional identity of the Coop at the moment health authorities agree it's

safe for larger numbers of people to be in the building at the same time.

The alternative is continuing with the “21 century management system” that pulled us through the crisis. Comprised of an elaborate digital system, the General Coordinators making policy decisions and base leadership by paid staff under their supervision.

That decision will have already been made when you read this letter.

La lucha continua. Viva la Cooperativa de Alimentos!

The struggle continues. Long Live the Food Coop!

Sincerely and in Solidarity,

Susan Metz

