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Moscow Food Co-op
Newsletter Dec. 1986



ASKING THE BIG QUESTION

By: Bill London

Now that the November 4th election results are in, and the Co-op Board of Directors chosen, we can shift our sights to the next big question on the horizon. And that is:

"What's easier to use than ordinary paraquat?"

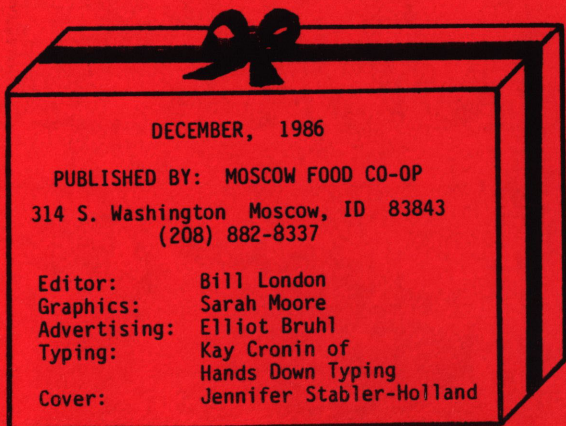
The answer is to be found in the latest issue of Farm Chemicals magazine. This magazine is one of a host of periodicals delivered free to any farmer or chemicals dealer who requests one. All those magazines emphasize what's "right" with pesticides, and are filled with beautiful four-color ads for some great chemicals & pesticides with appealingly macho names like Lasso, Bicep, and my all-time favorite, Broot.

Anyway, paraquat is an herbicide, and a powerful one at that. It kills plants, specifically weeds, and is most famous for its use a decade ago on marijuana (don't you remember the paraquat-tainted pot?). And now, for the answer to the big question (what's easier to use than ordinary paraquat?):

Gramoxone Super.

This miracle of modern science kills, and I quote, "virtually every annual grass or broadleaf weed you've got." And luckily, the liquid is a distinctive green color that makes it easier to see accidental spills. The new color, plus a distinctive odor just added, reduce the possibility of accidental swallowing. That, plus the new child-proof cap, will hopefully keep you from pouring this over your oatmeal. Which is probably a good idea, because, as the small print mentions, it is a poison, a restricted use pesticide, and the immediate effect of any person swallowing a small amount is death. They never do mention the long term or cumulative effect of spreading gallons of the stuff annually all over our landscape.

So, if you still have any questions, or continue to believe that a hoe or a pair of weeder geese might be easier to use than ordinary paraquat, why not talk directly with the friendly folks at Gramoxone Central? Their toll-free number is 800-441-7757 (extension 3192).





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IF YOU MISSED IT, HERE IT IS:
THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING



By: Laura Bokor

The backbone of the Moscow Food Co-op, as in any Co-op, lies with its members. On Saturday, November 15th at the Community Center, Moscow Food Co-op members gathered to discuss and vote on changes within the co-operative.

It began at 6:30 with a long table full of delicious desserts, refreshments and lots of talk. Then, as children were ushered into the hall to play, Bill Beck, who is leaving in January, started things off with the Manager's Report. Bill noted the wonderful energy from people who come together in a group effort, as in the moving of the blue cooler from the Co-op. The new white cooler is more energy efficient, which will save on both maintenance and utility costs, and will increase sales through product visibility.

We hope to increase sales with flyers, Idahoian ads, and asking members to spend as little as \$5.00 more a month to help the Co-op from sliding down in business volume.

After Bill's talk, Blue Leitch stood up to make a few new proposals. She suggested the annual membership fee be raised from \$6.00 to \$7.00, and raise the non-member's fee from 6% to 7%. The final vote changed the \$6.00 to a \$7.00 membership for single people or the first adult in the household. Additional adults within the household pay \$5.00. A \$1.00 a year membership for senior citizens was also considered, but voted against. There will continue to be no fee charged to senior citizens. The non-member's percentage was raised to 7%.

Carolyn Fortney suggested that all memberships be renewed in the same month every year. She felt this would be easier on cashiers, but this was voted against and the old system remains. You still renew when your year is up, no matter which month.

Volunteering was the topic of Mary Jo Knowles' talk; her basic message: "Come in to help anytime! We're very flexible with volunteers." This can mean one hour a month if that is all the time you have. But if volunteers work 3 hours a week, they receive a 15% discount. For any three hours of volunteer labor a 15% discount coupon is received.

Lastly, Bill London put in a final plea for an Ad Manager for this Newsletter. Elliot Bruhl graciously accepted the challenge, and begins his job with this issue. So the Newsletter will continue.

Then, in one vote the new Board of Directors was chosen. These people include Steven Barr, Sharon Lyons, Kally Thurman, Sue Beetsch, John McCarthy, Carolyn Fortney and Truman Woodruff.



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TIS THE SEASON TO BE SISTERLY



By: Mardi Baron

The Sister City debate continues. Where did it all begin, how and why? Where will the project go from here?

In July of this year I met with a delegation from the Nicaraguan Ministry of Urban and Regional Affairs on their short visit to Moscow. At that time they extended an invitation to Moscow to join in a sister city relationship with the town of Villa Carlos Fonseca, and through such a relationship to foster a greater understanding between the peoples of our two countries. It was my feeling that this was a perfect opportunity for the individuals and groups in Moscow who have been working so hard for peace and cooperation in Central America to have a "parent" or umbrella organization. I brought a resolution establishing a committee to work on a formal Sister City relationship through Sister Cities International to the City Council, and it passed by a 4-2 vote.



Shortly after that vote I had the marvelous opportunity to travel to Villa Carlos Fonseca and to make initial contact with some of the citizens of our proposed sister city. That whole trip to Nicaragua was a high point in my life, and I could write for pages on my learning experiences there, but let me just share with you some information about our new friends in Villa Carlos Fonseca.

Villa Carlos Fonseca is located 45 km. southwest of Managua and it takes about an hour to get there from the capital. (It took our group a little longer as we got lost, and forded the same two streams twice in our wanderings!) Villa Carlos Fonseca is a "municipality," and would be most closely related to a U.S. county. Its population is made up of 16,872 rural and 2,876 urban inhabitants. The municipality has 7 pre-schools, 29 primary schools, 2 secondary schools, one health center, 5 out-patient clinics, and 7 churches of which three are Protestant.



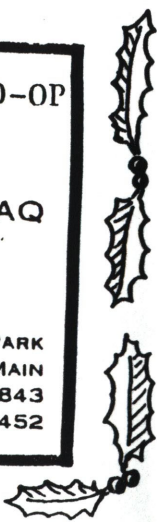
The primary economic base is agriculture, and the major crops are sorghum, corn, Scotch broom; and there are also farms producing pork, beef and poultry. Of these farms, 21 are cooperatives, and 65 are individual producers. There is also a local factory which produces alcohol and employs about 150 residents.

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The standard of living in Villa Carlos Fonseca is among the poorest in Nicaragua and their needs are many. There is lack of food, medicine, housing, school supplies, and clothing as well as farm machinery, fertilizers and seed grains. In fact, a specific project with which they have requested our assistance is the formation of a cooperative for purchasing and dispersing agricultural products (much like a Latah County Grain Growers, Inc., or Palouse Producers). I asked local officials whether there was anything they would compare to the Moscow Food Co-op, and there was not.

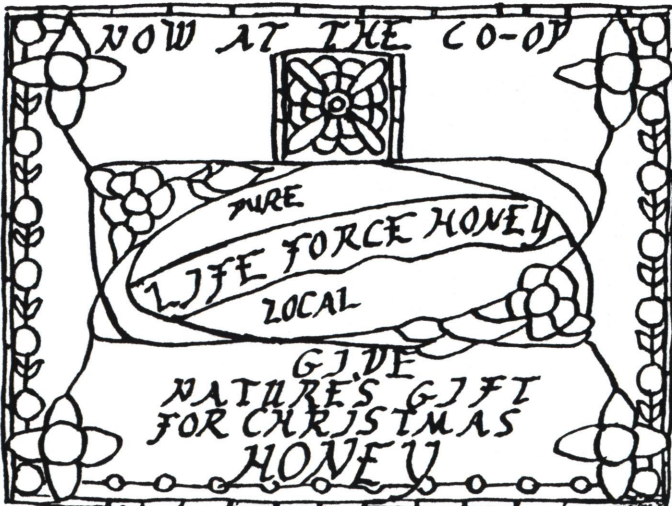
In spite of these great needs, the people of our sister city could not have greeted me with greater warmth, nor have I ever seen a people so full of pride and hope for their future. I believe that we have a common hope as well, and that is that through getting to know one another on a one-to-one basis we will all learn more about ourselves and each other, and come to a deeper understanding of the real meaning of peace.

The Moscow Sister City Association has just this week mailed off our \$225 dues to Sister Cities International, and we are anxious to receive word confirming our formal relationship. The Association is actively seeking members, and anyone interested in joining may do so by writing:

Moscow Sister City Association
P.O. Box 8367
Moscow, Idaho 83843

A \$5 contribution is very welcome, but by no means required. I think that it's also important to remember that the Association is free standing, and receives no governmental support whatsoever.

Peace is everyone's responsibility and is always a local issue! Come join us.



By: Kenna Eaton

On November 19th, the Co-op was the scene of the first meeting of our newly-elected Board of Directors. After introductions all around, we got down to the main item of business on the agenda - the question of how to replace Bill Beck as General Manager. After lively discussion and good questions all around, the Board decided to change the staffing system. Instead of a General Manager and three Co-ordinators, we will be going back to four co-ordinators. So we will begin the hiring process this week by looking for a 4th co-ordinator to be focusing on finances and board liason (see minutes of the meeting for more detail). Bill gave an impromptu manager's report before we set the next meeting dates and times (Tuesday, Dec. 16th, 9 p.m., Bill's house - all are welcome, bring something Christmas-y). Until Next Time...



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Little Ms. Mary Pat says:



"What I like best about shopping at the Co-op is all the fringe benefits - and all the fringe characters."



BROUGHT TO YOU BY...

By: David Cook

Our own Moscow Food Co-op operates a small retail outlet providing us with access to a variety of bulk, natural, organic, basic or hard to find items. This is the final step in the chain between producer and consumer. Stepping back in the supply system we find our co-op relies on a number of other groups to produce, procure and transport food to our store for us. In the spirit of supporting a broader system of cooperative enterprise, a large portion of our goods are brought to us by a wholesale food cooperative, Equinox Food Exchange.

Now completing its 10th year of operation, Equinox is distributing goods from various parts of the U.S. to retail co-ops, food buying clubs, health food stores, grocery stores, and miscellaneous restaurants and institutions, from the Cascades to the Rockies. Sales for this year will be in the neighborhood of \$1 million with slightly over half of it going to food buying clubs.

Our co-op is a member of the Equinox Co-op just as some 6-800 of you are members of the Moscow Co-op. Over the years we have invested roughly 1/4 of our assets in Equinox in order to provide ourselves with our own co-op wholesaler. As a member and one of the largest single purchasers of Equinox's goods, we have had a representative on the Board of Trustees at Equinox for eight years (yours truly). Over this time several key factors have emerged:

- 1) There is a consistent demand for low cost, good quality whole foods in the region.
- 2) The relationship between the amount of natural food desired and the location(s) of the people wanting it makes distribution an expensive and time-consuming proposition. This is a difficult region for a small wholesale distributor to operate.
- 3) The members of Equinox have never been able to invest enough money in their wholesale co-op to adequately finance the business. Some 90% of the business is financed by debt - an expensive proposition.
- 4) Periods of intense wholesale competition, management difficulties, and reduction of credit from suppliers has led to years of losses and increasing debt.

Equinox has been able to survive for 10 years because there is a solid market. In order to survive and prosper it needs to: (1) develop more business close to home - on existing trade routes, especially Spokane; (2) Continue to control expenses affectively; and (3) Replace debt financing with retained profits and/or added investment from members.

Three years ago, with new management, things started improving; more money was borrowed from the Washington Small Farms Region Network, and inventory and service improved, and the losses began to decrease. With another change in management early this year,



things are getting even better. Equinox broke even in the 3rd quarter of '86; the first time in the black in several years. Beyond general interest, all this is important to you for a number of reasons:

- * Through your co-op you are owners of Equinox and hence have an organizational responsibility to keep up on this and see that the Moscow Co-op remains an active and responsible member/owner.
- * In the Spring (on the equinox) there will be an annual meeting of Equinox's membership which you may wish to attend.
- * Elections will be held for the Board of Trustees, and my position as Co-op representative on this board will be up for grabs.
- * There will be a proposal for major changes in the articles and bylaws of Equinox to bring the documents up-to-date, and make the organization more effective.

I will follow up later this winter with more details on the upcoming Equinox Annual Membership meeting. If you have questions, or should you wish to discuss any of this, please contact me at 882-9296.



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