

# Buffalo Bullshead

## Winter 2009

P.O. Box 336 Hardwick VT 05843

Phone: 802-472-6020

Fax: 802-472-8203

E-Mail: Buffalo1@vtlink.net

Web-site [Buffalomountaincoop.org](http://Buffalomountaincoop.org)

Co-op Hours Monday thru Friday;

9am to 7pm Saturday; 9am to 6pm

and Sunday; 10am to 4pm



### **Cooperative Alternatives to the Capitalist Meltdown: An Economy Based on One Person, One Vote - Erica Buswell**

**Erica is on the General Management Team at the Belfast Maine Co-op Store**

As our mainstream financial institutions are failing us, it's time to start thinking about more creative solutions than "bailouts" to restore national financial security and prosperity. There are alternative, self-regulating economic models to a free-market economy which still allow for private citizens to make decisions about how and where monies should be invested or spent. They are called cooperatives.

The cooperative business model has enjoyed success for more than 150 years, and is currently utilized throughout the world to bring economic and democratic empowerment to the communities that it serves. There has never been a more appropriate or necessary time to develop a more cooperative economy.

One of the fundamental differences between cooperatives and other investor-owned businesses lies in the driving force behind our purpose. Both types of businesses are typically for-profit enterprises, but in a cooperative, our first responsibility is to run a business that will meet the needs of our member-owners.

It's our job to make available the goods and services that our members want and need, and this is the mechanism that drives decision-making in the everyday life of a cooperative.

Contrast this idea with the mechanism for decision-making in our corporate counterparts: Is it going to help the business turn a profit? Needs for goods and services will be met only if those needs help maximize the bottom line, and if they don't, the odds are good that your needs are going to fall by the wayside.

What would our national financial picture would look like now if folks had chosen to finance their mortgages through their credit unions, or chosen to join or start housing cooperatives, instead of turning to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac? Would the housing market have become over-inflated if mortgage lenders had been focused on meeting needs before turning profits? Next, consider who the owners of a cooperative corporation might be, and how a co-op divvies up the pieces of the ownership pie. The owners of a cooperative are its members -- the individuals who use the goods and

services of the co-op, and who invest their equity and their patronage in the business.

They're you and me. They're our friends and our neighbors and the people we do business with every day. But our advantage as a cooperative is that we have mechanisms in place to ensure that all co-op member-owners are equal investors in our businesses. When it comes time for members to make decisions, all members get one vote, regardless of the number of shares we each might own. This idea protects equality and democracy.

Compare it to the idea of one-vote-per-share, which has no mechanism in place to guarantee that the concerns or ideas of the individual with the single share or the shallowest pockets will get any air time in the boardroom. Imagine how different the marketplace would look if our national wealth was equally owned and controlled by collectives of individuals, rather than bestowing ownership based on individual collections of wealth.

In cooperatives, the accountability circle is also more accessible. Since most co-ops are locally or regionally based, the odds are good that the directors are neighbors, people you work with or have other social relationships with. They are real people that you might have the opportunity to interact with on a daily basis. If you have an idea or a concern, you can leave a message or a note in the board's mailbox, or attend one of our monthly board meetings.

Consider some of the other advantages of local ownership and control that cooperatives can offer to the communities that they serve, particularly when we are looking at a sagging national economy. By design, profits have to remain invested in the cooperative in one fashion or another, in order to benefit the cooperative as a whole. This allocation can take the form of investing in equipment, services, or staff that

can help to improve the quality of the goods and services a co-op offers to its members, or they can be returned to members in the form of a refund or dividend.

The co-op business model has proven itself to be a stable and successful alternative to



*Opening pomegranates. Arghans soap cooperative, Kandahar, Afghanistan. Photo: (c)www.sarahchayes.net*

the mainstream. The [British Columbia Cooperative Association](#) [6] estimates the survival rate for co-ops after 10 years in the marketplace is 46 percent, compared to 20 percent for private firms. That's the kind of relative financial success that is really only possible when the individuals who invest in a business have the opportunity to exercise democratic, shared, and equal control in an institution working for the benefit of the co-op as whole.

Ponder the cooperative possibilities. Prosperity is possible, in every business sector, if we remember that together we can do what we could not do alone.

, See the full article at <http://www.peaceworkmagazine.org>

## Menu Changes in the Café

As you know, food prices are going up everywhere. With the new year, this has hit home for us in the café.

Over the past couple of weeks, we have been working on a menu review, assessing what sells and what doesn't and reconfiguring the menu for both ease of ordering and ease of preparation for café workers. In the process, we also realized that some of our more popular menu items are in fact losing us money!

With this weighing on our minds, we are forced to raise some prices to cover our costs. We are also implementing modifications such as changing the basic vegetables we use seasonally, in order to best utilize what is available more locally and keep our costs down. For example, you will now find cabbage instead of green peppers in some of our basic veggie dishes, and tomatoes may not be available during the winter months. Using inexpensive beans for bulk and nutrition in items such as the breakfast burrito will also keep costs under control while allowing continued hearty portions.

Look for our new menu in the coming weeks. Hopefully, the familiar will outweigh the changes, and any tweaks will be improvements. We still offer a variety of foods to meet the dietary needs of as many people as possible, and will continue to utilize extra produce and items from throughout the store to save everyone's resources.

Our goal, as always, is to provide our patrons with a comfortable space and nourishing and delicious food, all at reasonable prices that allow us to cover our costs. Feedback and questions are always welcome about anything café-related.

**Thanks for your patronage! Deb and Rachel**

### A Vigil

Twenty-nine women  
stand in jackets of wind  
and Michael joins them.



You can't keep a good man away  
from the vigil of Women in Black.

Snow falls and roses bloom  
on Lucy's black scarf.  
She speaks to reporters:  
"Stop the bombings so food and  
medicine can get through."

Thirty people stand  
wrapped in wind and flurries

and Chryss appears  
Unfurling a banner.

You can't keep a good man away  
from the vigil of Women in Black.

The banner shows a blue planet  
on it. Is that ours?  
We claim earth by being here.

"Can you help Ann hold up the banner?"  
"I'll only be here for ten minutes."  
Can you help me hold up the  
world for ten minutes?" asks Ann.  
"Yes."

Phyllis Rachel Larrabee – from *Shoveler on the Roof*

### **Digging In, Wendell Berry on Small Farms, Local Wisdom, and the Folly of Greed**

Excerpts from an interview by Jeff Fearnside in *The Sun* magazine, July '08 See the entire interview at; [http://www.thesunmagazine.org/issues/391/digging\\_in](http://www.thesunmagazine.org/issues/391/digging_in)

**Submitted by co-op member Suzanna Jones**

Fearnside: *Stopping by a local eatery on the way to your farm, I asked people what they might want to ask you. Henry County (Kentucky) is small, they noted, and farming isn't very profitable anymore. So, why did you stay when you could have left for, as one waitress put it, "glitz and glamour" elsewhere?*

**Berry:** I just happen to have no appetite for glitz and glamour. I like it here. This place has furnished its quota of people who've helped each other, cared for each other, and tried to be fair. I have known some of them, living and dead, whom I've loved deeply, and being here reminds me of them. This has given my days a quality that they wouldn't have had if I'd moved away.

There have been some good farmers here. The way of farming that I grew up with was conservative in the best sense. I learned a lot from people in Henry County. Probably all my most influential teachers lived here, when you get right down to it. I owe big debts to teachers in universities, to literary influences, and so on. But it's the people you listened to as a child whose influence is immeasurable – especially your grandparents, your parents, your older friends. I've paid a lot of attention to older people. Of course, not a lot of people here are older than I am anymore, but some are, and I still love to listen to them, to my immense improvement and pleasure.

Fearnside: *What are some of the things that they say?*

**Berry:** They tell stories. They talk about relationships. They talk about events that have stuck in their minds. The most important thing is not what they say, but the way they talk. We had a local pattern of speech at one time. Now we're running out of people who speak it. But there were once people here whose speech was uninfluenced by the media, and it had an immediacy, a loveliness when it was intelligently used and great capacity for humor.

Fearnside: *In your recent talk to the Sierra Club, you mentioned "foodsheds". Can you explain this concept?*

**Berry:** Cities attract food products from the countryside the same way that a major stream attracts water from the smaller streams in a watershed. A foodshed would be the tributary landscape around a city from which the city's food would come. It goes back to the ancient concept of a town as a gathering point for the products of its landscape. And since cheap petroleum is a thing of the past we need to think this way once more. Sooner or later we're not going to be able to afford to haul food in from everywhere.

If you're going to have sustainable agriculture, it has to be adapted locally. Local adaptation means that you observe in the economic landscape the same processes that you find in healthy natural landscapes. You must have diversity. You must have both plants and animals. You must waste nothing. You must obey the law of return – that is, you must return to the ground all the nutrients that you take from it. You must make maximum use of sunlight. In those circumstances, you may leave the crops and animals pretty much to fend for themselves against diseases. The farm will have some disease but it won't have epidemics. If you look at a healthy forest, for instance, you see some prematurely dead trees, but not massive numbers of them.

Fearnside: *This sounds like the opposite of the monocrop agribusiness model that we have today.*

**Berry:** That's right. It's the diametric opposite of reductive science, and industrial agriculture is based on reductive science.

Fearnside: *How can communities ensure their food security?*

**Berry:** They have to maintain the health of their local landscapes.

Fearnside: *In your Sierra Club talk, you said that you would like conservationists to become more interested in "economic landscapes" – in working farms, ranches and forests. Do you feel that most people's definition of the natural world is too small?*

**Berry:** The human definition of the natural world is always going to be too small, because the world's more diverse and complex than we can ever know. We're not going to comprehend it; it comprehends us. The question is whether we can use it with respect. Some people in the past who knew very little biology were able to use the land without destroying it. We, who know a great deal of biology, are destroying our land in order to use it.

Fearnside: *Do you think that our unhealthy food practices have to do with our lack of connection to the sacred?*

**Berry: I would say so, because when you are in the presence of something you consider sacred, the natural response is to be humble and respectful and careful. This is dependent on the scale of the endeavor not being too large, and on a proper ratio between the amount of land needing care and the number of caretakers.**

Fearnside: *I came to Kentucky after four years of living in Central Asia, and I was struck by how environmental disasters both here and there have the same causes: shortsightedness, greed, and the concentration of wealth among a powerful elite. Do you think these are simply part of human nature?*

**Berry: Greed is a part of human nature, and greed is the root cause of these disasters. Once you have greed and the means of exploitation, the high-toned rationalizations – in other words, the excuses – follow as a matter of course. A real culture functions to limit greed. Our culture functions to increase it, because, we are repeatedly told, it's profitable to do so, though the majority of the profits go to only a few people.**

Fearnside: *What should the role of government be?*

**Berry: The appropriate role of government should be to see that power and money don't accumulate in too few hands. Unless a community consists entirely of like-minded individuals, the community must, to some extent, have laws, which means government. It's the nature of an organization like a government – or a corporation – to be self-aggrandizing and self-perpetuating. Once it starts running, it aims to keep running. The real limit on government would be reasonably independent, self-sustaining localities and communities. But if there is no local independence, then governments and other organizations have a kind of freedom that they wouldn't have otherwise.**

**If you've got 300 million people, most of whom produce nothing for themselves or for the community and to whom everything has to be brought from somewhere else, then there's no way you're going to have limited government, or limited anything. All organizations feed upon the helplessness and ignorance and passivity of the people.**

Fearnside: *At the same time, governments and corporations are made up of people.*

**Berry: People who go to work for corporations essentially abandon their integrity as individuals in order to serve the corporation. And the corporation has a set of rationalizations and excuses for its behavior that the people within it subscribe to, which means they have no moral force of their own. It's impossible for them to think for themselves or have a contrary opinion.**

Fearnside: *For most of us, work no longer satisfies our real needs, and so we must convince ourselves that what we do is needed. On the grossest level, that's all advertising or public relations is: creating a need for things that aren't needed.*

**Berry: You're right. The whole system depends on the ability of the people in power to convince the rest that they'll be better off if they buy certain products or elect certain candidates. They make false promises, telling you you'll be truly happy at last if you'll buy whatever it is they're selling. We used to call this "lying".**

## Hummus For The Holidays – Tina Ghantous

Recently, a good friend and fabulous cook told me she grew up not knowing about garlic, which got me thinking about my family's Mediterranean food culture, where avoiding garlic is a near impossibility. At our gatherings, the appetizer table has always been graced with a beautiful

platter of my grandmother's perfectly prepared hummus with a generous swirl of olive oil on top, sprinkled with pomegranate seeds and minced parsley, served with snipped triangles of the thinnest Syrian (pita) bread.

The first time I saw hummus outside of this culture, interestingly enough, was in the parking lot of a Grateful Dead show. I happened to be there with one of my cousins (whose mom makes the best falafel in the whole world), when a girl asked him if he wanted to buy a hummus sandwich. He bought the sandwich and opened it up to reveal mashed up chickpeas on bread. "What's this?" he asked the girl, and then delved into a lesson about the basics of hummus..

Hummus is actually the Arabic word for chick peas (also called garbanzo beans), the main ingredient. Chickpeas were one of the earliest crops grown in Mesopotamia, a staple food of the Middle East since time immemorial. Hummus-bi-tahini (the food I am referring to as hummus), or the paste of the chick pea with tahini, may have been eaten in ancient Egypt and the streets of ancient Rome. Lemons hail from India, and garlic from China, so just when these foods all came together into one dish, or where along the trade route, remain a mystery. Hummus is high in iron and vitamin C, and also has significant amounts of folate, vitamin B6, and dietary fiber.

If you would like to prepare your own hummus, here is a recipe followed by some detailed notes

### Hummus

3 cups of soft-cooked chickpeas  
2 or 3 cloves of garlic  
3 tablespoon of toasted sesame tahini  
1 to 3 tablespoon of fruity olive oil  
3 to 4 tablespoons of fresh lemon juice  
Salt to taste (1/2 to 2 teaspoons)

About preparing the chickpeas. You may elect to use the canned version, but I recommend cooking them yourself. They are available in the bulk bins at the co-op. Garbanzo beans have the longest cooking time of any beans I have ever prepared, and soaking them ahead of time will save time and energy, replacing soaking water before cooking. The best method is to set them on your woodstove for a long time on a cold day, the second best is to use a pressure cooker (about 30 minutes under high pressure), but they may also be simmered on the stove top for about 2 hours. Since cooking time can be variable, test by squishing one, it should mash easily, and the outer shells will be shedding off, which my grandmother patiently removes from each bean (you can skip that part and still come out with decent hummus). However you prepare the beans, rinse and drain before adding to your blender or food processor, or mashing somehow.

Next add the remaining ingredients to the blender. Some people add water, or chick pea cooking liquid, which makes blending easier, and reduces the amount of olive oil needed, but the taste and texture are compromised. Blend until silky smooth.

As with most foods, add ingredients to taste. Some people have also added cumin, coriander, cayenne, chives, roasted red peppers, basil, artichokes, feta, and more.

Garnish with olive oil, fresh chopped parsley, and pomegranate seeds.  
Enjoy with bread, as a vegetable dip, or sandwich spread.

# Child Haven International – Robin Cappuccino

Over the last several years, the Buffalo Mountain Co-op has been able to contribute several thousand dollars to the work of Child Haven International, which in turn cares for some 1,300 formerly destitute children in India, Nepal, Tibet, and Bangladesh. This donation has been made possible by member purchases of the ever-changing rainbow of used saris on display in the Co-op Café. Each time I go to visit my parent's home (also the Child Haven office) in Maxville, Ontario, I pick up these saris, donated to Child Haven by Canadian women originally from India.



*Morning calisthenics - glorious blooming lotus!  
Child Haven home in Savarsai, India.*

Inspired by the ideals and philosophy of [Mahatma Gandhi](#), Child Haven is a registered charity founded in 1985. We assist children and women who are in need of food, education,

health care, shelter and clothing, emotional and moral support.

Child Haven's eight homes accept children who are disabled, parentless, or from socially disadvantaged situations - and who are destitute, not receiving even one good meal each day. In the homes girls and boys are treated equally, and without regard to race, caste, color, religion, or culture. Living is simple and meals are vegetarian. We try not to Westernize the children, but rather attempt to raise them according to the highest ideals of their own cultures. We respect and foster the heritage of each child, whether Hindu, Muslim, Jain, Sikh, Christian, Buddhist, secular, or other.

Destitute children from birth to six years of age are referred to us by local social welfare agencies. Child Haven homes provide full care through high school, and then provide vocational training so that each child can enter the local society as a self-sufficient adult.

Once a year, I have the good fortune, as a Board Member of Child Haven, to accompany (or more accurately, to try to keep up with) my 74 year old mother, Bonnie Cappuccino, the International Director of Child Haven, on her visits to all the Child Haven homes. I can report first hand that the funds Buffalo Mountain has raised are much appreciated and well used to support some most wonderful, spirited, and resilient children.

**Many Thanks!**

*More info at [www.childhaven.ca](http://www.childhaven.ca)*



## **Tales From the Barnyard; or, *An Old Hippie Remembers* by Olive**

All the media attention our area has been receiving lately reminds me of a Tina Turner song, "An Overnight Sensation". She wrote that after singing and dancing her heart out for twenty years before she was officially discovered. You can hear her laughing at the end of the track, not sarcastically exactly, more ruefully as if to say, Hey, I've been here all the time - where have you been?

The history of the earliest folks harvesting, hunting and living up here would have to go back to the Abenakis and other tribes who had the sense not to stay over the winter. Before the cold really settled in, they made their way to milder climates like the coast of Maine or down the Connecticut River to wait things out till spring. Smart.

Fast forward to the recent past of the hippie invasion, and the metaphorical seeds we planted for the current organic movement, the back-to-the-landers, the localvors, etc. I remember the first winter I spent here, with the \$100 dollars my partner and I put together to buy a hillside with 60 acres and a little house made from recycled barn materials. We had more enthusiasm than any other resource, but it served us well. I made a root cellar out of a defunct refrigerator by digging a long enough ditch to bury it lengthwise, door side up, and covering it with lots of hay. I got the produce by working on Robert Houriet's farm as a carrot harvester, no experience necessary, with the added bonus of all-you-could-eat mid-day meals. (The accurate word for that being dinner, not lunch.) We would make a huge pot of turnips, carrots, potatoes, and squash with garlic and onions, coupled with on going discussions on philosophy, world religions and foreign policy. The work was heavy and dirty, and no matter how many pairs of gloves you brought, your hands always got so wet and cold you had to quit way before dark. Robert's carrots were beautiful - his soil was the same with compost piles and rotted manure everywhere. He deserves a whole article just on him.

That winter we had a harvest dance at the Knights of Columbus hall, to celebrate with all the growers, and the big item was carrot juice, with or without Jack Daniels! It was great dancing up a sweat as it was bitter cold outside. In those days we could work all day, party all night, and get up the next morning and do it all over again.

There was a contest for the most unusual vegetable, and I won. I submitted an Egyptian Multiplier onion with a stalk about three and a half feet tall with a huge head of little onions circling the top. It looked like something taking off into outer space, or else a really modern piece of sculpture. Either way, it was worth another round. Outside the weather was turning from below zero to wind and icy rain. We must have heated up the atmosphere. Why did anyone think this was a fun place to live? Well, it was.

**Transition Towns** – Interest and excitement are growing about the Transition Towns Movement begun in the town of Totnes in the U.K.. Hardwick area residents have been meeting and scheming about how to address issues raised through the Transition Town process. Speak to Annie Gaillard or Erika Karp for more info, and watch for signs of group meetings in the co-op. Here is part of a review of a book on the Transition Towns phenomenon.

## **Embracing Reality and Resilience, By Carolyn Baker**

A review of Rob Hopkins' *The Transition Handbook: From Oil Dependency to Local Resilience*.

For nearly a year I have been emphasizing in my writing that a positive vision must be held in consciousness alongside all of the abysmal events unfolding around us. Even as I have been insistent on staring down the collapse of civilization, I have embraced at the same time, what *could be* and have held in my mind and heart the threads of the new paradigm that so many of us are working to create. Thus it has been with great pleasure and relief that I have looked deeply into the Transition Town movement and found it to exemplify everything that I believe comprises effective relocalization and the shaping of alternative economies and vibrant communities. Not only am I in awe of what the people of Totnes, the first Transition Town in the U.K., have accomplished, but more so, that the Transition Town model has become contagious and is spreading to a variety of places throughout the world, in the United States, and closer to my own local community here in Vermont.

The Transition Town movement is all about preparing for energy descent and climate change and addressing the relationship between the two by essentially viewing them as two different aspects of the same problem. James Howard of Powerswitch in the U.K. states:

*Peak Oil and Climate Change are a bigger threat together than either is alone. Our biggest hope is to similarly converge our understanding of them, and how to deal with the problems they present. Peak Oil and Climate Change must be fused as issues-an approach is needed to deal with them as a package. If we are looking for answers, the environmental movement has pushed suitable ones for a long time. Peak Oil presents a tremendous chance to push those solutions ahead; failure to incorporate a full understanding of Peak Oil into the solutions argument for Climate Change would be an abject failure.*

Fundamental to the Transition Town movement is the notion of resilience. It is defined in the *Transition Handbook* as "the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change, so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks." In other words, resilience does not mean putting a fence around one's community, refusing to allow anything in or out. It means "being more prepared for a leaner future, more self-reliant, and prioritizing the local over the imported."

In summary, it is possible that a future with less oil could be more positive than the current addiction to fossil fuels, but only, says the *Transition Handbook*, "if we engage in designing this transition with sufficient creativity and imagination" which is indeed what the handbook is all about.

To its credit, this book does not sugar-coat the daunting reality of Peak Oil and Climate Change, but rather, offers a positive vision of preparation and myriad practical steps for manifesting it. An entire chapter is devoted to the somewhat paralyzing terror of everyone's "[End of Suburbia](#)" moment and the resulting "post-petroleum stress disorder", but also emphasizes that alongside that epiphany, we must cherish not only a positive vision, but one that we can realistically and pragmatically implement.

A fabulous chapter in the middle of the book on the "Psychology of Change" underscores how change happens and how we tend to proceed through it emotionally, emphasizing that "change doesn't happen all at once. Rather it occurs in increments or stages."

At the core of the Transition Town movement is the Transition Initiative which is an "emerging and evolving approach to community-level sustainability". They are based on four key assumptions:

- 1. That life with dramatically lower energy consumption is inevitable, and that it's better to plan for it than to be taken by surprise.
- 2. That our settlements and communities presently lack the resilience to enable them to weather the severe energy shocks that will accompany Peak Oil
- 3. That we have to act collectively, and we have to act now
- 4. That by unleashing the collective genius of those around us to creatively and proactively design our energy descent, we can build ways of living that are more connected, more enriching and that recognize the biological limits of our planet.

An entire chapter is devoted to how to start a Transition initiative, and although not directly related to the addiction to a fossil fuel lifestyle, Twelve Steps of Transition are offered. The most impressive of these for me is the first one: "Set up a steering group and design its demise from the outset." What a relief! No chance of this group becoming an entrenched, hierarchical, power-driven monster; no chance of success unless the entire community is engaged and becomes more effective in bringing about transition than is the steering group; no need for one or two individuals alone to try to save the world.

The last half of the book is primarily devoted to an analysis of the first year of transition in Totnes and some of the practical manifestations of transition there.

How does a Transition Town know if it has become resilient? What is the measure of viable transition? Here are a few resilience indicators:

The percentage of local trade carried out in local currency

The percentage of food consumed locally that was produced within a given radius

The ratio of car parking space to productive land use

Degree of engagement in practical transition work by the local community

Amount of traffic on local roads

Number of businesses owned by local people

Proportion of the community employed locally

Percentage of essential goods manufactured within a given radius

Percentage of local building materials used in new housing development

Percentage of energy consumed in the town

Amount of sixteen year-olds able to grow 10 different varieties of vegetables to a given degree of competency

Percentage of medicines prescribed locally that have been produced within a given radius.



The *Transition Handbook* offers both stunning inspiration and an assortment of ingenious, yet commonsensical tools, for actualizing the concept of relocalization.

The *Handbook* concludes with these remarkably uplifting words:

*While Peak Oil and Climate Change are understandably profoundly challenging, also inherent within them is the potential for an economic, cultural, and social renaissance the likes of which we have never seen. We will see a flourishing of local businesses, local skills and solutions, and a flowering of ingenuity and creativity. It is a Transition in which we will inevitably grow, and in which our evolution is a precondition for progress. Emerging at the other end, we will not be the same as we were: we will have become more humble, more connected to the natural world, fitter, leaner, more skilled, and ultimately, wiser.*

See complete article at [http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_16343.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_16343.cfm)