



Continued from p.6

is set up to fall if disturbed—take from the top. You say you can't reach the top? Too bad.

Here's the fruit and vegetable section. Piles and piles of perfect, unbruised and unmarked, insect-free orbs of color. Try buying one of each and eating them blindfolded. You probably won't be able to tell the difference between an apple or a pear because all the flavor has been bred out. But it's safe, it's perfect, no worms.

How about some meat? Hundreds of prepackaged steaks, chops and roasts are displayed for you, cut from the finest hormone-injected and speed raised meat animals. When you get it home, you find the side hidden by styrofoam is the one with all the fat, gristle and bone. The prices we pay for progress...

Now it's time to hit the main body of the store for canned, bottled and frozen goods. Here we get into one of the most complex marketing schemes devised. Surface packaging of the products costs consumers billions each year in higher prices. The wonderful pictures of tasty prepared foods shown on labels is now what your meal will look like, but that's progress.

Your tastes have been manipulated by advertising since your childhood, so without thinking you pick up lots of "snack" products with near-zero nutritional value. The food is flavored with superchemicals that zap your taste

buds, because the natural flavor has been processed out. You buy products like Pepsi or Coke because you have been conditioned to like them.

Even the so-called "staples" are not exempt from commercial ruination. "Enriched white flour" has to be enriched because almost all the nutrients have been removed by processing. "Polished rice" has had its nutrients polished right off.

It is really amazing how many competing products are in your neighborhood grocery market. It's also amazing that this competition is between packaging and promotion, since there is actually very little difference between the products themselves.

Checking out is a really fun experience. The checkers, poor slaves to a machine, are instructed to smile and say hello. Your selections are whipped through and put into a bag with incredible speed, and you pay your money. Sped on your way with another plastic smile and a "Thank you—have a nice day" and a few tickets to an absurd game or contest, you exit.

When you get home with the victuals, you may not have enough nutrients to meet your needs, since you have to be quite knowledgeable to pick the good food from the garbage offered by the modern American food industry.

But—that's progress, that's progress, that's progress, that's pro. ....

## Co-op...

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For its exotic products (when have you last seen a Mung bean field in Nebraska?), Open Harvest relies on "Blooming Prairie," a warehouse cooperative in Iowa City. The co-op carries grain products, cheeses, vegetables, teas and spices.

It sells mixed teas and herbal teas, which are considered an inexpensive source of Vitamin C. It sells edible beans and beans to be sprouted, such as alfalfa.

In the center of the store large bins hug masses of grains, barley and wheat—including bulgur, a parboiled cracked wheat flour. The co-op mills its own flour in a small mill in the basement. Large cans in the store contain molasses and honey.

Dried fruits and vegetables are also sold, as are bread, granola and peanut butter. Cheeses and fresh eggs are sold as sources of animal protein.

Vasina said that more dairy products and possibly even meats would be added, "if space and health regulations were less prohibitive."

Open Harvest considers everyone in the community a member of the co-op, but the store is kept open by its working members. A working member contributes a minimum of three hours each month, pricing, selling and packaging the produce.

Everything in the store has two prices; one is a 20 per cent markup of wholesale prices for working members; the other is a 50 per cent markup for the public.

The final 50 per cent markup is high in comparison to a supermarket, Vasina said, but the actual retail price is lower at the co-op because "there are few, if any, middlemen making profits off the products," he said.

### Labor a problem

Voluntary labor is "a problem every co-op has to deal with," Vasina said. "Some have to rely on a haphazard 'show-up-when-you-can' system. We try to have times when members can sign up to come in and work."

Vasina said he hopes someday his job as a paid manager (\$2.30 an hour) will be replaced by unpaid volunteers. An educational committee of the co-op attempts to inform Lincolniters about alternative forms of eating. Currently the committee is studying a "food vend" measure to present to the Lincoln School Board. This measure would require vendors to place nutritious foods in at least half the vending machines in the public schools.

"We now have around 200 members," Vasina said. "At first our members came from the anti-war movement and were concerned with economic alternatives. Now our members are more diverse: they come for the food. The most important thing is our cooperative method of distribution. We have to maintain a sense of community responsibility."

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