

## COMMENTS OF RUSTY SIVILS TO FBFC BOARD OF DIRECTORS, FEB. 16, 2017

I was delighted at the last board meeting to hear some discussion of ways to make the Co-op a transformative force in our community and in our world, pursuant to our vision statement.

One way for the FBFC to be a transformative force would be to set aside 1% of our gross sales to be given as grants to local non-profit groups, which would be selected by a vote of our members. This would be substantially beneficial to the community we want to transform and it would be empowering to our membership if they were asked to actually decide something, like nominating and voting for the recipient groups, even if they were not being allowed to make decisions about the Co-op itself. It would also serve as an admirable model of philanthropic responsibility in the wider community and the Co-op would garner great respect as a result. This model has worked brilliantly for the long distance phone company CREDO, and I have been bringing this proposal to the Board for years. It would be extremely valuable in terms of public relations and marketing, and should be adopted for its value as a business practice if nothing else. This is a perfect fit for a cooperative since it has a membership structure.

Another thing the FBFC could do to be a transformative force would be to actually practice member democratic control of the Co-op, as set out in the Second Cooperative Principle. At this point in our culture's history when we see that democracy is little more than a charade, when elections are routinely stolen, the country is run by powerful unelected forces and the public feels powerless to do anything about it, an institution actually practiced democratic governance, that empowered and respected the decisions of its members rather than suppressing them, would be revolutionary and would set a transformative tone in our community. Our members would feel excited and empowered because we would be offering something they are hard pressed to find anywhere else. The most important role for a cooperative is to be a real alternative to the corporate economy, where the basic motivation is profit, the customers are treated as just customers and there is no democracy or real interest in the community. The FBFC has instead gradually become a little corporation, focused on profit and growth, and run by insiders—the Board and management—who manipulate and marginalize the outsiders—the members of the Co-op—who are supposed to be the sovereign body of the Co-op, but who have been disempowered, never allowed to make decisions other than electing the Board, and the last decisions they did make flagrantly flouted by the Board. This is how a corporation works, not a cooperative.

If Anyone would like to discuss any of this please call me at 242-6073.

By the way, the statement on our website still says "In our community and in our work", instead of the wording of the board that adopted this statement, "...and in our world." Was this a change made by a subsequent board? If not it should still read "World", unless this board wants to change it.