

Opinion / Editorial Section

Opinion: A Cooperative ASUC

By Stefanie Bernay and Aaron Glantz

Why didn't the A.S.U.C. government accept the deal brokered by former Chancellor Tien and Student Regent Jeff Bravin that would have turned the A.S.U.C. store into an independent student cooperative free of University interference? We realize that Cal

And student cooperation has a rich history in Berkeley. Our USCA, the largest student co-op in North America, has been around for over 60 years and now runs 19 different properties and houses over 1,200 students. The U.S.C.A. is the most affordable housing in Berkeley because we pool our



by Marisa Galván
Scoop Managing Editor

I came to work one day at the end of last month, took a gander in my usually empty box and discovered a little folded up note. You can imagine my elation (I don't get much mail here) followed by ignominious exorcism when I dis-

Letter From the Editor

to compose simply by listening to me yam-mer on about who I was and why I was there. Unfortunately, it seems as though most Clones don't make it to dinner on a daily basis and thus were not privy to my digression on the beauty of cheese. Nevertheless, I remained hopeful. So, in response

fame and fortune was not enough to entice submissions for our logo contest. Although it hums me out, niceties don't seem to inspire member rhetoric or concern of any kind. Therefore, we attempt to, in essence, have something in this issue to de-

Berkeley Bayit Keeps it Kosher

by Ellen Rudnik
Special Features Editor

Nestled in the wooded alcove at the end of the Hillside Court cul-de-sac lies a beautiful turn-of-the-century mansion. Formerly the LeCombe Mansion (as in Le Conte Hall), the Julia Morgan-designed residence is now home to one of the myriad of private co-ops that exist in the Berkeley area. This house is different however, and it's a difference that's noticeable as soon as you walk through the door and note the *mezuzah*, a prayer scroll usually mounted on the outside door frame—you have just walked into the Berkeley Bayit (pronounced By'-oet)—the oldest continuously running Jewish co-op in the country.

Founded in 1960 as a non-profit organization, the Bayit (which means "house" in Hebrew) provides room, board, and spirituality, in a communal setting, for eleven Jewish students. Those who run their teeth in one of the USCA's houses might easily recognize certain aspects of the Bayit's collectivism: weekly meetings, collectivized workshifts, privacy complaints, etc. There are a few key differences however. At this co-op, every resident does every shift, on a rotating basis—with the exception of the

shopper, those lucky, or carried, enough to have a car. They end up performing the weekly *Cousins* runs. Residents estimate they do maybe three hours a week in workshifts.

The house's business affairs, such as mortgage and rent, are taken care of by an executive board made up of former residents. The board meets every few months, with most residents expressing satisfaction with the way decisions are made.



The overall structure of the decision-making process, from the board down to the weekly house meetings, is generally more relaxed and informal than in a USCA house. The Bayit functions "more like a large household than a collectivized dom," says former resident Mike Linkin. With only eleven residents,

each voice can make a difference. "My opinions have actually made changes in this house," says resident Gerice Goltsav.

The single most important difference though, says Linkin, between the Bayit and a USCA house is that the Bayit "is first and foremost a Jewish house and second a co-op."

A Jewish identity is integral to the Bayit. There are *menorah* on the dropcaps and *Shabbat* (sabbath) dinners every Friday night. The house keeps kosher, that is, it follows the Jewish dietary laws, though the extent to which it does so changes from semester to semester. Out of respect for other people's observance, "you're as kosher as the most kosher person in the house," says Linkin. Currently, the house maintains separate refrigerators for milk and meat, as well as separated dishes, sinks, pots and pans, and silverware. The house buys only kosher meat.

The Jewish atmosphere infuses the Bayit's residents with a cultural and religious identity they just couldn't get elsewhere. There is a strong sense of community, says Linkin. "Everyone has something in common."

Residents praised the ease of practicing Judaism in the house. Goltsav describes it as functioning "kind of unconsciously," while Linkin praised the Bayit's "effort-



Back in 1955, the Berkeley Bayit is home to eleven Jewish Co-ops.

less Judaism." "You don't have to worry about being an observant Jew," he says, "because it's there. The house is a Jewish house. You're going to remember Shabbat because when Friday night rolls around, there's a Shabbat dinner."

Over the years, the Bayit has weathered several crisis, including occupancy problems that threatened to shut it down. Today however, a diverse palette of cultural and community events has resulted in full occupancy and in-

creased people wanting to get in. Perhaps most notably, the house hosts an "open Shabbat" every month, a community dinner that draw up to 60 visitors.

The Bayit's unique combination of community living and Judaism provide a welcoming house for most residents. They enjoy the benefits of collective living with the spiritual identity of a shared cultural background—a successful formula, say its members. "It was the best experience I've had at Cal," says Linkin. "It felt more like a family."