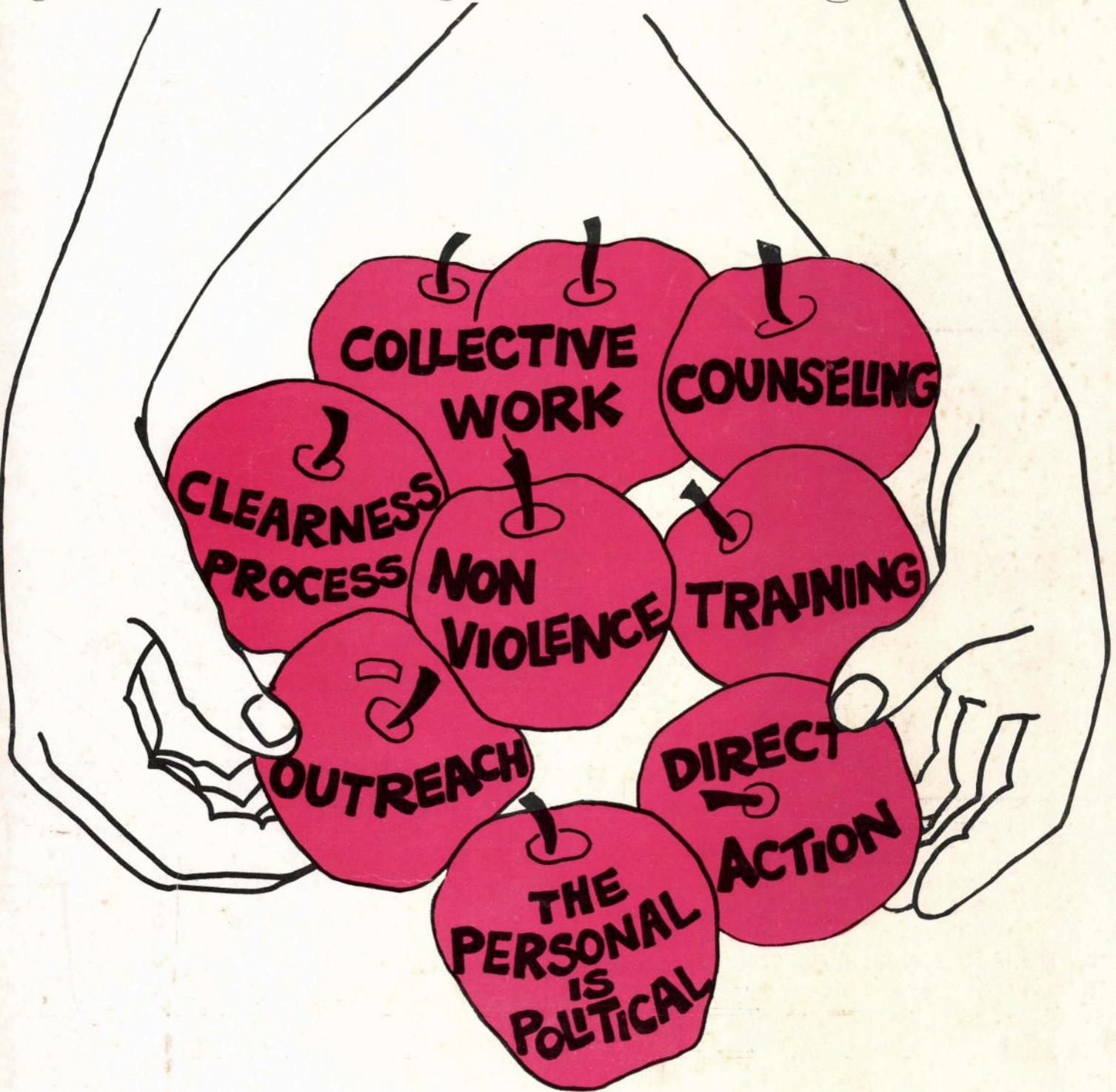


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Are We Moving Towards A New Society?

By Cynthia Arvio

This issue is a test of the ideas of collectivity and geographical dispersal. Today Rachel and I are assembling into a rough layout the xeroxes of articles written in Minneapolis and Ann Arbor, Savannah, St. Johnsbury and Philadelphia; edited in Philadelphia; and typeset partly in New Haven (by Paul Freundlich and Susan Hoch) and partly in Philadelphia. Soon we'll turn over our part to Chip Hedler, who teaches a class in communication skills at a school called Alternative East near here. As part of the class he and his students will be pasting up the issue and getting it ready for the printer, with the help of Mikki from Twin Oaks. Chip of Twin Oaks has been in touch with the whole process, encouraging and advising. At the moment we feel as if we have created an exciting kind of ad hoc network.

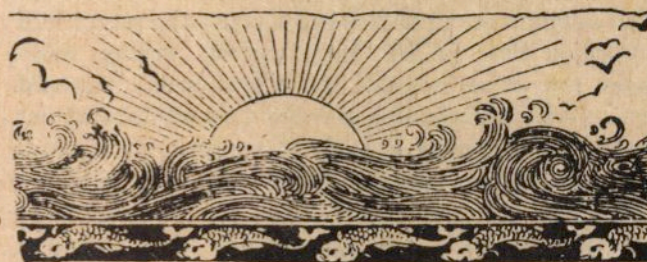
When Paul came through Philadelphia last winter he asked Rachel and me to consider putting together an issue about our own network, the Movement for a New Society. We asked ourselves, What are the things about us that would interest readers of **Communities**? MNS, which grew out of (some) anti-war activists' concerns for more integrated lives, now has almost six years of experience as a network of support groups which combine the personal, the political, the communal. Our members consider *training*--for everything from facilitating meetings to planning nonviolent action campaigns--and *personal change* to be basic and necessary to the creation of a decentralist, egalitarian society. Though Philadelphia is the largest unit with twenty communal houses, MNS is a lot wider than Philadelphia.

We decided to ask for articles which would reflect the multitude of interests of this widespread community. Though we couldn't possibly cover everything we wanted to, the issue touches on many of the important growing places of MNS.

How are our children raised and how do the politics of the adults affect them? We asked Rainbow House to write its story in *Are We a Family?* What do our households actually look like and how do we manage to get along together? *How One MNS House Runs Itself* gives an outline.

Minneapolis (see *Plowshare Community*) and Ann Arbor (see *The Collective Way of Life*) are representative of a thriving Midwest region. Minneapolis people are planning a Life Center, while people in Ann Arbor MNS are researching places to settle together on a long-term basis.

As strong regional groupings like the Midwest and New England arise, Philadelphia has begun to see itself not as the most important part of MNS but rather as a training center from which *affinity groups* can move out to start new communities elsewhere. Such a group from Philadelphia has taken root in St. Johnsbury, Vermont, described in *An Offshoot*. Exciting new clusters of people are coming together in California and Georgia (*MNS Sprouts in the Savannah Sand*). At the same time, a core of people who see Philadelphia as their long-time home is beginning to connect with the neighborhood through the collective called *The Bridge*.



In addition to the training we do in the Philadelphia Life Center (see Dianna MacLeod's article on the long-term training program), a Seeds for Change collective organizes and runs workshops for groups outside of Philly.

People in the first communal houses focused on living together in order to consume less, save money and time for movement organizing, and give each other emotional support for the long haul of changing society. But we soon discovered that personality clashes and role expectations got in the way of community life and political work. As we dealt with these it became painfully clear that *personal change* had to happen simultaneously with *action* if society were to be altered basically.

The first old roles to be challenged were sex roles, as women became aware that even in this best of all possible communes we were not being treated equally, that assumptions about our *supporting* position were still being made. At last, men are becoming aware of their responsibility to change themselves radically and are adopting a feminist analysis of society. (See Kenn Arning's article on *Men Against Patriarchy*)

Other issues have kept on erupting as people explore their feelings about ways they have been oppressed. For a long time it was assumed that most of us were drop-outs from the middle class. Only last fall a group of people from working class and welfare backgrounds began to speak, write, and hold forums to raise the consciousness of the rest. What does *simple living* mean to a person brought up on welfare? Is *bread labor* (subsistence earning to give time for political work) right for someone whose lack of education forces her/him into low-paid jobs? What is the community's responsibility? Penny Jeannechild's article looks at this issue from the inside.

This spring in Philadelphia a collective of women aged fifty and above *spoke out* to a group of younger women about their feelings of *invisibility*, of being placed on the shelf, of not being heard. Now, more and more, their ideas and their energy are influencing this community. (Read Ruth Dreamdigger's account of *Wonderful Older Women*).

Last year someone who undertook to write a dissertation about the Life Center took as one of his major questions, *Are the new selves cooking too fast?* Rachel Bedard describes the steps she went through in becoming a radical and her attempts to reach back to her roots to connect with her working class family. Judy Lashof, writing about Pleiades, the women's house she helped form, is candid about her high expectations and her disappointments but also celebrates Pleiades as a viable feminist space and a needed connection between MNS and the women's movement.

MNS has learned a lot and still has a lot to learn. Though MNS is not all white and middle-class, our relationships with local people are no doubt hindered by our underlying racist and classist attitudes, on which we



have an immense amount of work still to do. Thus far we have been so focused on our own growth and development that we have had little energy for relating to other movement groups locally (Philadelphia is the worst offender in this regard). And in spite of how well our communitarian anarchism works (or is it decentralized socialism? these labels are a bit arbitrary), coordination can be a problem.

Some things that keep popping up in these articles might need some explanation.

One of our most successful inventions has been a form of "take-it-into-your-own-hands" education known as a *macro-analysis seminar* or *macro*. The manual for these seminars, which help people tie local problems and oppressions into a picture of the larger whole and empower them to take action, is sold widely in the United States and England, with additions being prepared in other countries.

One of the cements of some of our communities is *re-evaluation counseling*, a peer method referred to in several of these articles, which helps us to release the emotion from past hurts that blocks our good thinking and our relationships in the present. Its underlying assumption of the strength of the individual and people's ability to solve their conflicts contributes to building a *no-put-down* society. (For more information, write to *Re-evaluation Counseling Committees*, 719 Second Avenue North, Seattle, WA 98109).

In the very beginning, MNS people discovered that to save thousands of hours of frustration they needed to develop *structures and processes* for living, meeting and working together that could be depended on to allow input from everybody and move business to a successful conclusion. Now a meeting never starts without an agenda review and rarely ends without an evaluation. The facilitator has the group's permission to move through the business, interrupting those who get off the track but stopping for hugs, songs, or perhaps to break into pairs to express feelings or thoughts. A determination to come to decisions through consensus (as the best egalitarian way) led to the invention or discovery of such processes as *Small Group to Large Group Consensus*. (Send for *The Monster Manual*, otherwise known as *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution*, for hundreds of suggestions about group process, conflict resolution, training workshops, direct action campaigns and much more.)

Is it unrealistic to imagine that such "revolutionaries" as we, busy organizing meetings and dealing with personal feelings, can affect the larger issues of our time—corporate structure, nuclear power, patriarchy? Some have seen our focus on internal development and training as a slipping back from earlier determinations to change things *out there*.

We don't know the answers--but as this article was being written, we in Philadelphia were welcoming twenty-five of our approximately one hundred residents back from New Hampshire jails in the Seabrook nuclear protest. The rest of us had been busy organizing life in their absence--the coop, child care, postponed meetings, contacts with newspapers, (even turning the lights on and off in a house whose residents were all in jail). We found that our members, used to collective living and decision making and trained in the techniques of nonviolent confrontation, were able to take their places easily in the nuclear plant occupation so carefully planned by the Clamshell Alliance. They played a useful part in training others in the group organization

ON SPIRITUALITY

by Michael Lilith

Though spirituality is not an intentional part of our communal life, from the beginning I have felt our community nurtured and challenged by an awareness (both individual and collective) of a natural, timeless process. Acting out of this awareness feels essential to me. My sense is that it's very important for others here, too. Not quite a year ago, I wrote a poem that reveals the kind of spiritual growth I have experienced here:

*Like ants
carrying a worm,
our lives are connected
by what we hold
in mutual need.
We cannot nurture alone.
And nurturing is all we can do.
The choice
is in pace
and direction of growth.
We cannot stop becoming whole.
As soon as we have grown
to apparent self-sufficiency
we realize a larger whole
and the connectedness
of increased needs.
Freedom comes
with accepting those needs
and responding from that acceptance,
and with knowing
that fulfilling the needs
is why we are here.*

within the armories. Whereas in two-week General Training Programs in Philadelphia, planned months ahead, MNS trains about 15 people at a time, in New Hampshire, amidst the uncertainty and confusion of occupation, arrest, jailing, and armory life, MNS people mobilized to train hundreds in group process skills in the same two week period. They came back energized by contact with others equally committed to working for a new society. That's what we in MNS want, and what will make the difference in long-term change--that nourishing connection that means our network is part of the larger, organic new life of the people which is growing everywhere.

LIFE CENTER

*What am I finding in this place of comfort?
What am I finding in this healing place?
I'm finding
 my new self
 and losing
 what?*

*I swear I won't lose you
 My old self
My
 twisted
 choked
 self*

*My
 frantic
 desperate
 self*

*My
 wishing
 wanting
 self*

*My
 midnight writing
 self*

*I promise you
I'll keep you safe
In my bottom drawer
And when I'm strong and healthy
I'll protect you
With my life!*

—Cynthia Mallory

□

ARE WE A FAMILY?

Living and Loving with Kids at

RAINBOW COMMUNITY

by Sandra Boston, Alan Tuttle & Firefly

Hi, Raisin! Have a rainbow, Raisin! Rainbow raisins is a wonderful expression adopted from a candy wrapper which has added zest to our house name. Rainbow House originally came from a Pete Seeger song (...and because I love you, I'll give it one more try, to show my rainbow race...).

We are a political support community within Movement for a New Society, numbering ten beautiful human beings, a cat, three guinea pigs, a rabbit, and assorted mice (shhh). Fai and Sandra are both single parents; Alan, Adam, Steve and Firefly are single men. The adults range from 24 - 37 years old. Julie, Aaron, Nathan and Kyle are from 6 - 10 years old. We've been together for 1½ years, though we have all been in the Life Center community longer.

Rainbow was started in 1975 by Fai, Adam, Sandra, and their four children. We established criteria for house membership based on the kind of community we wanted. These criteria were (and still are):

1) Strong commitment to nurture children, as something adults value for their own growth (not just as a maintenance task); and to see relating to children as a revolutionary involvement;

2) Participation in morning sharing five days a week, when we rise at 7, do yoga, share a few minutes of silence, and then describe our plans for the day so that we'll all be tuned in with each other and can offer any support or be aware of hard things that people will be doing during the day;

3) Acceptance of an equal share of the costs of the community and the maintenance work, both day-to-day jobs (cooking and cleaning) and long-term jobs (like house repair);

4) Commitment to personal growth, to being challenged by others to change behavior which is not congruent with a nonviolent revolutionary lifestyle. Along with this goes a commitment to solving problems as they arise, and making decisions by consensus;

5) Insofar as possible, the creation of a close (family) atmosphere, in which we value the relationships within the house and are committed to each other's growth and happiness, and where we spend good fun time and occasional retreat time together.

CHILDCARE

4 Our scheme for child care was very well thought out

and is constantly evolving. Basically the format is this: Each adult is with the kids two mornings (rising time till leaving for school), one afternoon (3:30 through supper) and one evening a week, plus one block of time on the weekend. These are times when the adult's attention is committed to the children. That doesn't mean doing everything for them. We act on the principle that children should do everything they can for themselves. They prepare all of their own meals and clean up after themselves. Even Kyle, at 6, can scramble or fry an egg, flip a pancake, and make puddings and spaghetti.

We adults know that none of us got enough good adult attention when we were young, not enough support for working through the hurts and struggles with our friends, too few *strokes* for our courage and creativity. We are committed to providing these things for our kids. Listen to a young Rainbow Raisin talk about how it is for him to live communally: *It's fine. It's good. I like that there's lots of people, and when everyone wants something, there's always somebody around to do something.*

What are some of the ways we've made this a good place for children to grow and be? Some of them are: special time, bedtime, godparents, and days off.

† **Special time.** Special time is our jargon for, *Will you spend time with just me and nobody else for a while?* All adults in the house make dates with individual kids about once a month. The kids most often initiate it and are ready with very specific plans of what to do: going to movies, bowling, ice-skating, playing pool, cards, bike-riding, having piano lessons, or going out to eat. We used to have a big chart that showed special time every day between one adult and one kid for each of the children, but we exhausted ourselves. Spontaneous occasions where the kids take responsibility for seeing that it happens (and are understanding of adults' other commitments) feel better to everyone.

† **Bedtime.** Bedtime is always an event at Rainbow. When you have to spend only one evening a week doing it, it's fun. After cards, popcorn, and hanging out, after supper, snack and cleanup, the big event is the story. We have quite an oral tradition. Each adult has an individual style and some favorite characters to tell about. Those stories become great opportunities for giving the kids revolutionary models, high adventure, or just plain good sex education.

Sandra has a series around Atalanta and John (from the *Free to Be You and Me* record), about how they each went out to see the world after the race. Fai tells about children who decide to take over their school and run it their way. Adam tells about lovable Gumball who's kind of awkward but very strong and big and who is always getting cornered by his girlfriend. Gumball mirrors the kids' feelings about sexuality (*Oh, no! Kissing--ugh!*), and other adults can sometimes be found lurking around corners, listening in for laughs. What's really fun is the next morning at morning sharing, when the person who told the last night's story has to tell it again for the adults because it was so great! Though some were initially hesitant to try storytelling, we all found it a great adventure into our own imagination and creativity.

† **Godparents.** The *godparent* is a very important person in our family scheme: an adult friend from outside the house who comes and has a special relationship with one particular child. Godparents come intentionally to take that child away from the tribe, to give undivided attention and make her/him feel really thought-about and special beyond the immediate family. They are the child's first specific link with the adult world of the Life Center community.



The godparent is someone they can call on the phone, spend a weekend with, ask for time from and know that they will get it. Some godparents don't come regularly, though that's the goal. It doesn't matter that they aren't always there; what's important to the child is that they have made the commitment to play that role, to be available and responsive, to be a safe person for the child so that s/he can begin learning how to relate to adults in the wider world.

† **Days Off.** This is another special feature, reflecting once again our strong commitment, within communal living, to good individual attention. The idea of the day off is to get to stay home from school when no other kids are around and not have to share their parent with anyone. It happens once a month, and the kids spend the whole month planning what they want to do with the day--it's all theirs. And it meets a very important need for the parent, too, to experience each child as an individual and not always as *one of the kids*. Lots of loving happens on that day.

Sandra says, *One of my commitments to myself as a parent is to let my children teach me about being a child*

so that my inner child can come out more and be a part of my personality. So, on those days off, I try to imitate my son: if he decides to skip, I skip; if he starts to climb a stone wall, I follow; if he wants to eat things that I don't think go together, I at least try them unjudgmentally. When I most feel like not doing what he's doing is when I see that, from a child's point of view, being an adult can really be heavy and dull and boring.

WHY WE'RE TOGETHER

Living communally is lots of fun, it's inexpensive, it's enriching and supportive. We need each other's support to do political work, and also to design our lifestyle better to reflect our values. Some of these values are:

1) Nonviolent social change as a primary commitment, which means less time spent for earning money, less income, and a need to share expenses such as rent, utilities, maintenance, child care, and cars;

2) Simplicity as a style of life, out of an understanding of humanity's relation to nature and an awareness of our destructive, consumer-oriented culture. We eat vegetarian, shop through food co-ops, and share our possessions (and their costs);

3) Nonsexist behavior as an important component of cultural and political change. We see how sexism has kept women from being assertive, confident, valued members of society; we see how the parallel male conditioning has cut men off from important experiences of nurturing, from human support and an awareness of their own valuable emotions;

4) Children's liberation as a specific way of building a new society. We are learning ways to empower children to take responsibility for meeting their own needs and changing situations in which they are not being treated as whole people. We try to be aware of times when we oppress children by with-holding responsibility, ignoring them, or putting them down verbally.

WORK WE DO

Living communally and fairly simply (though not in comparison with most other countries in the world) we adults find less need to spend most of our time earning money. Like others in the Life Center, we try to find part-time jobs, to keep time free for social change, or just plain social activities.

Firefly works with the Fatted Sprout, an alternative food service. Along with its soybean casseroles, its members cater a strong political message about world hunger and agribusiness. They serve no meat dishes, and work only in places where they can do cooking and consciousness-raising around food issues. Firefly got experience cooking with a cooperatively-run restaurant at the University of Pennsylvania.

Sandra also combines her needs for money and social change by teaching a Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) Course. It is a course on communication skills, dealing with the issue of power in relationships. Sandra also has initiated a feminist theology group and has been a planner/organizer of one of the Life Center's women's weekends.



Adam and Sandra work with a group called the Churchmouse Collective. This group challenges Christians and the institutional church to a radically simple Christian lifestyle. They focus on the mobilization of church economic resources for the poor, and on the plight of political prisoners (liberation workers) in other countries, usually U.S.-supported (military) dictatorships.

Sandra and Alan are part of the West Philadelphia MNS strategy group. This group of six is developing priorities for MNS activities and looking toward possible common focuses for the local MNS groups. Alan is a receptionist and security person for a friendly office building in center city, and he picks apples in the autumn. Firefly and Alan are in a collective called Men Against Patriarchy (MAP) [see article in this issue], whose focus is to help men move past the destructive role conditioning they have received, and support women in their struggle for liberation.

Steve does infant care for a family that lives nearby, and is often seen walking around the neighborhood with a baby strapped to his chest. (It's not an uncommon sight in Life Center meetings to have at least one non-Life Center child present while the adults *get on with business*.) Steve, who is a native of Quebec, watches the developments in Canada, especially those regarding the separation of Quebec from Canada. He has been part of a training program for social change organizers, and has recently joined the Macro-analysis Collective. This collective plans group-run seminars giving a radical overview of the world situation and introducing people to several empowering group process skills. Steve has also been part of a men's consciousness-raising/support group.

Fai is part of Seeds for Change, a collective which does training for people wanting skills in social change work and play. Seeds sent two members to upstate New York recently to help rural people organize against the construction of a power line through their farm land. They have worked in Washington, D.C., training people for nonviolence work in prisons, and for an anti-nuclear power plant demonstration in Seabrook, N.H.

Fai helped to start a women's study group in the Life Center, and a women's direct action group within MNS. She also is an associate administrator in a business consultant firm. She is finding it harder than she'd expected to bring about changes there in her workplace.

ISSUES, SUPPORT AND CHALLENGING

† **Feminism**, is probably the single issue of most interest to all (the adults), and certainly affects adults and children at Rainbow. It can be all too easy to use or slip back into sexist language, or to forget how loud and dominating men's voices can be. We try to be aware of role conditioning, and to choose house jobs that counteract traditional expectations of what work we do.

The kids from Rainbow encounter the full weight of our sexist society every day on the streets and at school. We feel that sexist and abusive language is damaging and part of the competitiveness children are taught. We feel that any putdown is inappropriate, and we interrupt that behavior when it happens.

Male domination takes some subtler forms. There are only two women and a woman-child in the community, and sometimes the male presence is overwhelming. For example, Julie lives with three young boys as housemates. When they each have friends over, there is very little space left for her and her friends. So, we have had to limit the number of boys that can be in the house visiting at one time.

† **Gay Liberation** is a related issue that affects two of us Raisins directly. Firefly is gay and Alan is bi-sexual. The whole house is supportive of our struggle, including the kids, though it is an area where consciousness-raising is still needed sometimes. The need to be open and proud about being gay is of prime importance to us in the process of liberation, and that need is met at Rainbow.

† **Sexual Relationships**. Rainbow is unique because, though we are highly involved with each other, there are no primary sexual relationships in the community. When the house started, it was agreed that primary sexual relationships in the house would not be encouraged. If two house members chose to develop such a relationship, they would check it out with the community first. The major concern here was that primary relationships within the community would tend to weaken the cohesive feeling of the whole. Since our decision, there has been such a relationship and it did create some major problems. Now there is a general view that the original agreement is a good guideline, something we should be conscious about.

† **The Family** of Rainbow does not mean the same thing to everyone. Sandra, for example, would like everyone to meet each morning for sharing; others would sometimes rather sleep. Alan and the kids like loud, hard music; others like a quiet house. Firefly would like to have two family nights a week with everyone together; Adam prefers one.

Another problem area is **religion**. Two of the house members have a deep commitment to Christianity and want to be able to express that in the house. A Jewish housemember feels that overt religious expression--like frequent playing of Christian hymns on the piano--can be a continuation of the cultural domination which Jews have had to live with for centuries. We try to reach a balance by celebrating both Jewish and Christian holidays and otherwise being aware of and sensitive to people's needs.

Our class backgrounds definitely influence who we are, how we view the world, and how we look at money and work. We come from working class to upper middle class families. Our parents ranged from Communist Party workers to U.S Air Force officers. Now, we are trying to figure out what is fair for us. For example, should the upper class person who made the downpayment on the house get to be sole owner of it, simply because she was privileged enough to have that money available to her? Should, on the other hand, those who have not inherited money and do not have upper class connections pay less in the house? What about income-sharing? And, what kind of support can be given to working class people in the community as they try to relate movement politics to their own class constituency?

Length of commitment is another factor. We don't yet have an agreement on the duration of our community. We have agreed that we will stay together for a year, and then will re-evaluate and perhaps renew our commitments. Some Rainbowites envision a long-term community, while others plan to move more frequently.



TV. There is no television at Rainbow, and not because no one wants it. Most of the adults feel that TV is generally not good for children (though there are surely some good programs). We've found that the kids are satisfied not to have a TV in the house if the adults are willing to give them good attention. We have lots of games, rides, and special times for them, and when they want to see something specific, they visit a nearby Life Center house that has a set. When asked how he feels about living in a house with no TV set, Nathan at first says he wishes we had one. But after thinking about all the ways we have planned around not having one, he says, *I think it's better this way.*

TOOLS FOR ADULTS AND KIDS

PET, Parent Effectiveness Training, is our most powerful adult-child tool. Its premise is that if those with power use it to get their own way, they are creating winners and losers and leading their relationships inevitably toward power struggles and miserable times. With this tool we learn to listen for the feeling-content of what a person says, and to respond to that feeling in a way that allows the person to get out bad feelings and then have the space to think. We also learn how to negotiate when there is a conflict of needs, and to

compromise rather than hurt someone else. PET is useful for adults and children alike.

Some of the negotiating that PET encourages leads to pretty unorthodox behavior at times. For instance, six-year-old Kyle always goes to sleep in the second floor hall. Why? Sleeping next to the windows scares him, and no one minds that he sleeps in the hall.

Last week Kyle suddenly insisted on staying home from school--it happens in every family, right? We did a problem-solving session with him in which we listened to his reason, then told him why it would be a problem for us. When he still insisted, we said we would let him take space from his problems at school if he were willing to take responsibility for them by going to his teacher about them the next day. We said we'd go with him to support him. He agreed, and that's what happened. It was hard for him to follow through, but he had a good experience saying what he needed, confronting authority at school about what wasn't good for him there, and having to listen to the teacher respond. In the end, he worked things out with her.

RC, or co-counselling, is another skill we use in relating to the children. It is a complex theory which would take a while to describe. But briefly, it is a kind of attention we give when someone is hurting either physically or emotionally and is unable to think because of the hurt. We use it when the kids are hurt by accidents, fights, or insults.

The basic idea is that with a safe person who is not going to judge their feelings or behavior, kids (all of us) know just what to do to get bad feelings out and get rid of them. It requires going with the person to a private place and staying with them, reassuring them, while they cry, scream, struggle, or whatever, to discharge the hurt. (Sometimes children will try to get away, to reject the attention they are getting because they aren't feeling good about themselves.) Nathan says of counselling, *I think it's all right. Helps get the feelings out.* Julie describes the adults as holding on so you can't get away, *but it's OK with me.* People always feel better when their feelings are aired and listened to, so we have a contract to use RC among us. This works as much for adults in housemeetings as it does for kids who are fighting. The difference is that we tend to expect adults to state their own needs, while with children we might have to interpret the needs they are acting out.

What does Adam say he likes about living in Rainbow? *I like it,* he says, *when I come home from a long trip and each one of the kids gives me a big hug. And when Kyle says I'm his teddy bear and hugs me.*

For Sandra and Fai, it's seeing lots of other people loving their kids, and seeing that they are getting all the love and attention they need. They appreciate all the different kinds of help that are available for the children, and the reaching out and growing tenderness among the children and adults.

Alan, who was letting the kids pigtail his hair while we were talking, says, *I like getting my hair done on Sunday nights.* He went on, *This house is a playful one and quite tight-knit -- I think largely because of the kids.* □

CLASS AND COMMUNITY

by Penny Jeannechild

We're all middle-class dropouts here, right? Wrong. Some of us are working class, some were brought up on welfare and are still struggling in ways that others manage to avoid. A few contradictions and a little irony, by Penny Jeannechild.

There we were—I, my two children and their father—living our not-so-happy nuclear family life, when along came Eileen, wanting to live with us, wanting to live with children, my children, pushing me to see how isolated I was, how I could get support, where I could get it. Soon, three people moved into the house, the kids' dad moved out, and I was on my way to becoming a hippy feminist communitard.

And so it began, my now six years of living in community. These years have been the best of my life, for they have provided me with child-care, shared household expenses, support, shoulders to cry on, friends to come home to, pushes to grow, nutrition consciousness, and a political base. I could not live any other way and survive economically, emotionally. Community provides a mirror in which I see the best and worst of me and change because of it.

My kids have options now, too. No longer is there just me telling them what I think is right or wrong. They have many opinions to choose from. When my energy runs low, there's always another adult around to share with them, to help them get what they need. I never was athletically inclined, but there's always Eileen to go swimming with, to take hikes with. I hate reading stories out loud to kids, but Adam loves doing it. When my anger rises to the potential-child-batterer level, there's someone there to interrupt me *and* to let the kids know they're okay. They are getting so much more from life because of this decision to live in community.

Community can also be a drag, of course. There's sometimes too damned much noise, drab food I'd rather not eat, decisions I can't make till checked out with five other people, someone who eats all the ice cream without thinking about the other ice-cream lovers, a moody person who dominates house meetings. But I'd rather be here than anywhere else.

Well, almost. A year or two ago I began hearing myself complaining at house meeting, griping to anyone who would listen that "community ain't all it's cracked up to be. Something's not feeling right about living here any more." Interactions with housemates and community members often felt "loaded," less friendly. The wrong words seemed to push some angry button in me. I'll share this story as an example:

Thanksgiving rolls around and one of my housemates announces he's going to spend a two-week vacation having fun in New York. On what? I wonder aloud. On my savings, he replies. Savings? I question. Yeah, he says, I've got a couple of thousand dollars I was given by my grandparents, plus the money I've saved, of course. *A couple of thousand* my mind screams. Two thousand? I ask. No, he says, opening the refrigerator door, thirteen thousand. . . I ponder this sum for several seconds. It is beyond imagining that someone I *know* has that much money. And then I think back to house meetings where finances are argued over for hours, where he says that \$2 a week is too much for us to afford for the kids' allowances, that two movies a month is too much to spend for the kids, where he tells my son that the cost of a much needed and desired baseball should be taken out of his allowance. I think of the few hours he works, the amount of money he must be making, and the fact that each person in the house pays the same amount for rent and utilities. Something is wrong here. He saves several thousand dollars while I'm borrowing money to cover the cost of the kids' winter clothes. I leave the conversation feeling jealous, angry, resentful and greedy. I want some of that money. The fact that he pays the same amount of money for rent on ten times my income means that he's able to save, and I'm in debt. I fight the feeling of hopelessness, feelings that I'll never get ahead financially, feelings that I'm a lousy radical for caring so much about money. But I remain silent.

* * *

It is this silence that I and the other working class people in this community are now fighting.

In the spring of '76 our Feminist Collective invited three women who had been involved with MNS in the early days to speak to a women's meeting about why they had chosen to move outside MNS to do their political work. It was an exciting evening in which we grappled with the concept of *classism*. The women challenged our preaching "simple living," insisting it was an insult to working-class people who never had had certain material goods; that to be telling them not to accumulate, or to "share" what they had, was a reflection of our lack of understanding of the reality of their lives. Even the notion of communal living was held up for examination: for what could be more

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“communal” than a family of seven living in three rooms? My head nodded an excited “Yes, yes” throughout that meeting. I left with a sense that these women had given a name to those “feelings” of mine at Thanksgiving: working-class oppression.

As a result of this forum, I pushed the Feminist Collective to spend several weeks on the issue of class within the collective. How did our class background affect the political work we chose to do (in this case, training other women in nonviolent direct action skills)? What was our “constituency”? What were we trying to say to these women? Which of their real needs were we addressing? What was our childhood like as a result of the class we were born into, and what still hurt about that?

As we looked at these questions from week to week, tension arose in the collective. Some women felt that we should stick together as women and not try to put emphasis on our differences, but the working-class women persisted. (There are two others besides myself.) We eventually developed a good process for working on the topic, with lots of space both for safely feeling the hurt and also for doing brilliant thinking.

Addressing ourselves to the issue and talking about it with others opened it up in the larger community. Our feelers were out: we saw classism everywhere. It was like the early days in the women’s movement: our best friends were class enemies; their assumptions about us were wrong; their reasons for caring about us were wrong (or so it felt for awhile). Old friendships were put to the test with the cry, “That’s a pretty classist thing to say!”

The strategy group of Philadelphia MNS initiated a series of forums to discuss the topic. We established criteria for breaking into class identity groups (working class/lower-middle/upper-middle/upper) where each person shared what had been positive about being from that

class background, what the commonality of experience was, what stereotypes of working-class people our families had, and what stereotypes each person still had about garbage collectors, secretaries, hairdressers, construction workers and other lower-class people. The working-class group did “speak-outs” (experience-sharing) to the entire group. (We decided that it didn’t make sense for the middle and upper-class groups to speak to the whole group because working-class people had been listening all their lives to the middle and upper-class experience and values through the media, the schools, magazines, movies and the whole culture. Our sharing centered on our experiences as children, our struggles as a result of our class background, and our concerns with classism within MNS. In addition, we made recommendations to the other groups for changes we felt were needed in order for us to feel safe and a part of the community.

Some of the sharing went like this: “We are embarrassed by our backgrounds, by our sometimes lack of higher education, by our inability to earn an adequate wage. We see that many MNS members could move out of communal living and survive economically, while we need to live this way in order to survive. We have learned to relate to working-class people as ‘them’ rather than as our mothers and fathers. We remain silent when housemates talk about loans and gifts and inheritances from family. We remain silent while others with less need and more assertiveness reach out to get what they want, often through connections we don’t have and don’t know how to make. Basic information about loans and grants were not part of the secretarial and business curriculum in high school, and consequently many of us think we are limited in our educational pursuits. Those of us who were fortunate enough to get a college education were encouraged to be teachers—nothing else. We resent our middle-class housemates’ assumptions that *everyone* has gone to college, read



Winnie-the-Pooh as a child, gone to summer camp, read *Seventeen* magazine as a teenager. We feel humiliated when a group of us 'radicals' goes to a restaurant and one of the middle-class people unawaresly demeans the intelligence of a waitress; some of our mothers were waitresses. We are angry with ourselves that we have left behind our working-class heritage (often this means our parents) and adopted 'radical' but middle-class values about cleanliness, money, recreation."

Recommendations we made to the other groups were: to examine values about money, how it gets spent, who it gets shared with; to form ongoing class identity support groups to nurture our awareness and develop strategies to confront classism; to encourage working-class people to share their life experiences and others not to talk unthinkingly about trips to Europe, etc.; to be aware of the opportunities they have had which working-class people have not; to identify and counter classist behavior in themselves and others.



One of the most exciting outcomes from this year of struggle is the formation of the upper-middle-class group: that is, people who either have or have access to a sizable amount of money. In addition to personal sharing, this group will be doing thinking about what to do with that money, how to handle it thoughtfully, in a non-paternalistic fashion. Another development is that the working-class people have "come out of the closet" about their financial situation and in some cases have received the



financial support they've needed to further their education, to travel, to get their teeth fixed. We are all beginning to realize that we don't need to accept the limitations of our backgrounds, that it's time to step past the feeling that "it will always be like this" to the understanding that life will be whatever we choose to make it. And we *can* reach out and *ask* for, sometimes *demand*, what we want and need financially. The support of middle-class people has been invaluable in this realization.

Where do we go from here? Our discussions are still in progress, our groups in the "getting to know you" stage. But I trust that we will all continue to grow and change. I know that for me, the silence is over. I can state proudly that I grew up on welfare, have "only" a high-school education, that, no, I never went to summer camp. When asked to share childhood experiences, I no longer shy away in embarrassment and humiliation, but frankly say that several years of my life were spent in foster homes because my mother wasn't stable enough alone to keep the family together. None of my past is something I should be ashamed of. None of it is my fault.

The next steps for me are to move on the power I now feel, to get the education I deserve so I can earn an adequate wage and have the things that are not luxury, but my human right. I have fears that I'll go overboard if I ever come into any amount of money, but I've been told there isn't a person alive who doesn't have fantasies of being one of the idle rich. The fact is, my consciousness and temperament would never allow me to lie back and live off another human being. I like to work, just like my parents.

LONG RANGE PLANNING: DISCOVERING THE COLLECTIVE WAY OF LIFE

by KATHY & Judy Lilith

The decision to see if we could plan long-term goals together came as something of a surprise. We never set out to become an intentional community, much less the "family" we now feel ourselves to be. Our growth toward both was partly haphazard, partly an organic outcome of our separate needs and searching, partly a result of shared understandings and commitments from our common experiences, especially with MNS. Two years ago we were a collection of people strung together loosely, as people tend to be in university towns, experimenting with living together in a place where communal living is not uncommon, where it is "safe" to live that way.

For the six people loosely referred to as Ann Arbor MNS, one of the most troublesome things, especially with respect to the children, has been transience. That is also a major facet of Ann Arbor, a university town and highly mobile, the setting of our lives and work. Individually and together we have decided to move from Ann Arbor and find another locale in which to settle down for political work.

Our coming together as a "family" was molded by a retreat-vacation we took in the West last summer. Besides travel time, we spent almost a month in a remote area of northern California. There were few outside influences to distract us from the start of serious dialogue about ourselves as political individuals, acknowledging the healthy differences among us, and working on acceptance of those differences. That trip was a luxury that we probably cannot repeat, but it was important in deepening our ties. Distributing responsibility for planning the trip, travelling in close quarters, and sharing in the work of camping out in the wilderness allowed us to see each other function under a variety of circumstances which revealed other selves inside each of us. Now we find ourselves in a process of planning our next moves together.

To give a few quick categories which might help identify us (but please don't freeze us in them forever!): we are eleven adults and three children living together. Six of us adults have a closer, political connection as part of MNS, and form a kind of core in the larger living community. We are both men and women, gay and heterosexual (at this point mostly gay), both biological and non-biological parents, from middle and working-class backgrounds. The adults have come to see living in community as enabling to their personal and political goals and are connected in various ways—through MNS, through work in alternative health care, through activities in the Ann Arbor community.

Everyone in the community shares in maintenance of daily life and in the caring for our three young children. Michael, Theo, Margie and Iris have been income sharing and working together as a collective which does manual labor in the neighborhood. They, along with Judi and Kathy, form the adult long-range planning group.

In Ann Arbor we MNSers are one splinter of a fragmented radical community, viewed with suspicion by many. In the MNS network we are known for having struggled intensely with issues of sexism and heterosexism, for having worked hard to forge new images of ourselves with wider ranges of skill and power than our previous sex role patterns allowed.



The Room Game

To show you how we struggle to work things out collectively and to the greatest possible satisfaction, we will share the process we named *The Room Game, or: How to Fit Eleven Adults and Three Children Into One Ten-Bedroom House Without Squashing Anyone*. This year we tried to live in two houses, one a mixed house and one set up for lesbian space. Through no planning of our own, the woman-space will soon be lost and its members need to move into the other community house.

We started community discussion two months ahead of the moving date, exploring and generating housing options during bi-weekly meetings. We designed and revised a time line as we went along. At each meeting, two or three people put together an agenda of concerns and ways of approaching them.

Step one was a verbal presentation by each adult of individual housing needs to the entire group, as well as writing those needs on large sheets of paper and taping them to the walls. One or two adults had sat down with each of the children to gather information on what they wanted to see happen, so that their voices could be heard clearly, amidst those of more assertive adults. (We found

out that Ursa needed a "few big people to move out" and Marisa needed a purple room.) For a while our living room looked as if it were papered in newsprint—a whole wall full of Needs!— but it gave us a chance to reread what others had said and to think about ways to accommodate those stated needs creatively.

Next we identified problem areas that needed to be resolved before the households could expect to merge harmoniously. We gave attention to pets, to the dynamics of the children, to intimate relationships (or ex-intimate relationships) that would suddenly be brought into the same house. The people concerned with each of these issues were asked by the planners to work them through outside of large meetings, usually with the help of a few others. At times we adapted the "clearness" process used frequently by the MNS network to help resolve problems.

Step three of the room game consisted of mimeographing the floor plan of the house and giving everyone three copies. Imaginations stretched as everyone tried to come up with three different plans, each of which took all the needs into account as much as possible. (This time we papered the hallway leading to the second floor!)

Step four involved hearing reactions to various plans and then condensing the numerous plans into three options by working in small groups, during one of the community meetings. Each group came up with the one arrangement it liked best. There were two weeks for responses to the plans to settle out in people's minds.

Step five was the final decision, which by that time was anticlimactic. A lot of energy had gone into investigating needs and emotions, and this had effects far beyond simple housing issues. It gave us a new way to work together, and a new history of problems solved. The five steps were set into a time frame which allowed space for emotional outbursts to happen and to settle, so that clear thinking could be done about creative solutions between meeting times. The result was a successful resolution to the housing question, along with progress in the group's ability to air and resolve other difficulties.

The example of this particular community dilemma shows the way we try to make decisions as a group, taking emotional and informational factors into account and having that input available to everyone. It also shows how we have made use of some group process skills of MNS (like airing personal or "hidden" agendas, and rotating the responsibility for meetings), adapting those skills to make them work for us. In a sense, this short-term housing "crunch" was an unforeseen opportunity to practice the kind of planning skills needed for larger and longer-range ventures.

Long-Range Planning

There are widely varying personal and political needs to take into account, and just getting to the starting gate has taken a long time. At the moment there are only two men in the community. They are experiencing the isolation and loneliness of men who actively seek to divest themselves of male privilege while learning to nurture each



other. The urgent need for Michael and Iris is either to join a group with men who share their goals, or to attract new men to this community (an unlikely hope since we plan to leave town). The four women in the "core" group are talking with MNS-oriented women in several parts of the country about forming a feminist community and beginning to search out potential sites. Yet we would hope that the men could also form a support community and move together with us.

One night we sat down to begin long-range planning and discovered that though three of us were quick assimilators and were all ready to move, the other three were hanging back, feeling like things were moving too fast. We came to loggerheads. We split into two groups for emotional safety in expressing our feelings about being held back or pushed forward. Though pillow feathers and dishes went flying, we got our anger out and are all still together and better able to talk. We're trying to respect the fact that some have faster paces or greater absorption rates for all these new ideas than others.

Our plunge into planning has showed us how complicated it is to make decisions based on everyone's needs. Some of the initial issues have broadened in scope; new realities have emerged. Three intense issues are children, class and group structure. The way each relates to planning deserves more explanation.

Children

Everyone at times has the fantasy of splitting, of living a simpler, more individual life, politically more effective, freer, whatever. A lot of what keeps our lives so complicated is the children, both the energy spent stumbling through the dark caves of feelings about them, and the energy spent to arrange for them, be with them, keep up

When we are responding to the children's needs for continuity and stability, we are also responding to our own.

with their lives. But children are also a strong incentive for not taking off when the urge is the greatest, when the self criticism or self-doubt is the highest. Peter (7), Marisa (5), and Ursa (4½) have all formed special trusting relationships with each other and with other adults (although not necessarily with everyone). Ursa had announced that it would be too crowded in one house and that some adults should move out, but she was dismayed at the suggestion that any particular person leave.

When we are responding to the children's needs for continuity and stability, we are also responding to our own. We do not see the responsibility of collective parenting as simply another thing to be "into." The childcare collective is not just another "product" in our personal growth. Over the course of two years, the children have opened themselves to the love and nurturance of others beside their mothers. Originally it was our idea—now we need to act responsibly. With our commitment to these children we are choosing to root ourselves in time and place. Even if we do not all stay in the same community, our lives will remain grounded in our common caring for these children.

Class

For a while our understanding of the relationship of class orientation to our chosen lifestyle was mainly intellectual; we understood the inherent privilege in being able to choose our lifestyle—in having the mental freedom to elect nonviolence as a way of life. Long range planning has thrown a lot of class realities into bold relief as our real feelings of trust and mistrust of each other have sharpened and clarified. Although four adults in the larger community identify with working-class backgrounds, the whole tenor of our community life has been one of middle-class downward mobility, of simple living, vegetarianism, "dealing with feelings." Partly because we all have so much caring and genuine good will toward each other, it has taken a relatively long time for the really hard, angry realities to be recognized for what they are. Oppression is a beast with many heads, some of them very hard to see. Though most of us come to community from a privileged place—by education, background, race, etc.—for some living in community has come out of necessity rather than political choice. This is especially true for a working class single mother in our group. As the hard feelings surface, we've begun to be aware of those class-related differences among us.

The challenge which lies ahead involves digging out disturbing middle class behavior rooted in our upbringing. Since many of us have attempted partial repudiations of our class heritage, the issues are complicated to get at.

There are different needs: those from middle class backgrounds have tried to reduce consumption and involvement in the dominant culture, and those from working-class backgrounds have been working to "get their share" of economic security and meaningful work. Values and attitudes about work and money often clash when we try to solve such problems.

Group Structure

Our understanding of leadership and power has grown by examining our own community structure, collective and individual identities and our unwritten rules. We did not come together in an organized way, but grew topsy turvy. We never wanted to have "rules" and neglected to address these issues. The ideal was to solve problems with good communication as they arose and to try out solutions. So, we learned together what worked best, how the housework could get done, how we could make decisions, how new people could join the community. To date only childcare and cooking nights are regularly scheduled. Contact and experience with MNS gradually converted many of us to creating processes to work through hard problems. But common understandings about our functioning as a unit began to have the feel of unwritten rules, so that when newer people met with an approach they did not like they kept quiet, interpreting it as "the law." Everyone in the community has felt that pressure at least in small ways. One long-time member decided recently that to lose weight she was going to keep her own store of food and not eat with the others. That was hard to tell people, and one newer member's response was almost a gasp. "But can you do that?"

"But can you do that?"

When an unwritten "rule" gets exposed, usually when someone is feeling pinched by it, we deal with it. Using this method of coping means that people have to assert themselves against the power of collective understandings. For example, one of those collective understandings is that the most assertive people should not dominate meetings and that careful attention should be given to everyone. At times, however, this means a less assertive person who really doesn't want to speak feels it hard to assert herself to be left alone!

There is a continual and creative tension between remaining open to new input and holding onto the strengths that have been built on past experience. We don't want to alienate others, we want to learn. However, we recognize that it is the glue of our shared assumptions which makes us capable of handling hard situations with each other.

Despite a period of strong collective identity, we have learned that we need the flexibility to express ourselves as total people. During a critical growth period of this community the members of the work collective, Many Hands,

spent income-producing hours, political activity time, and a good deal of leisure time learning collective behavior together. This created a dangerous "in group" vs. "out group" dynamic among us. In efforts to learn how to behave as just one part of a group, each of us has submerged parts of her/his individuality to blend with the whole. As the level of trust has grown, however, along with a new proficiency in acting for the group interest, so has our ability to expose parts of our personalities which we initially thought would be too extreme for others to accept. With safety to do so, hidden "vices" have begun surfacing right and left, frequently to the accompaniment of much laughter and the discovery that soul-mates exist. Food and music are two examples. We have all become vegetarians for political reasons and the music we play or listen to is woman-identified. But no longer does anyone need to sneak away for the occasional hot fudge sundae or an evening at the bar with country music. (The relaxation about the political "correctness" of behavior in ourselves and others comes partly from the understanding that we can value the cultures of different class'backgrounds.



The Future

Becoming a cohesive group and starting to "come out" as a family has brought with it a decision to leave Ann Arbor. We have gained a lot from living in this university-dominated town. Its liberal flavor and radical reputation have given us ideas both of what we want and what we do *not* want in moving to a new place. The lifestyle we have developed and feel most comfortable with (particularly with respect to gayness) rules out our relocating in a place where we would stand out as the newest target for the lynch mob. We don't want to flaunt our differences or alienate others, but neither do we want to live a life in the closet or constantly on guard.

We haven't yet agreed upon a particular focus for our political work, and it is probable that in a new location we would each join with different existing groups and activi-

ties where our skills could be put to use. Plans to do political work together would be deferred. The vision we would like to work toward is building a strong local network of radical groups or cells, working in concert for change.

To a certain extent, in its beginnings, this community gathered around the magnetism of one person (partly because her energy and accessibility meant new people got to know her first), and we have had to deal with the effects of that history and person-centered connection on our community. We have consciously tried to alter those circumstances which concentrate power in ways we do not want. Concretely, other people have started taking on increased responsibility and learning community "maintenance" skills they may not have had or cared about before. Each one of us has made an effort to share information and develop bonds with everyone. It has meant Margie's letting go of some things that seemed special to her. We needed to find out whether our tensions around her unacknowledged leadership were resolvable before launching full force into planning a future together. The discovery that they are has released energy for forging ahead.

At times there is a temptation just to scrap all careful thinking and spin an arrow on the map.

What does feel clear is that we want to live in an environment that is not predominantly white and middle class. Sometimes we think we want to live in a place where people are "ripe" for organizing. But we also realize that we are a lot closer to the beginning of our political education than we are to its maturity, and that it would be presumptuous to formulate criteria based on nothing but our own political needs and foci. And at times there is a temptation just to scrap all careful thinking and spin an arrow on the map.

Conclusions

Emerging from our experience with long-range planning for a political community are several conclusions. It takes a lot of trust, and trust can be consciously built. There are no magical means to trust: over time people can (if they choose) accumulate evidence of others' acting in responsible and responsive ways. There need to be enough similarities in political perspective and vision to build on. There must be commitment by all members to struggle with differences, avoid win/lose situations and deal with everyone's needs. Viewing these as skills in problem-solving which can be learned and practiced by everyone prevents undesignated leadership; communication is a skilled activity vital to community survival and growth. Letting the laughter flow through it all, making time away from the intensity simply to enjoy each other is important too, strengthening the foundations of trust and cohesion. Without that time we would burn out. With it, we recharge our caring selves, our passion for action and change, and our affection for each other. □

ANN ARBOR COLLECTION



ON LETTING GO

by Kathy

I am a private person by nature. But when I left my marriage for single parenthood, I knew I did not want to live alone with Marisa. Without totally knowing why, my driving motivation was to connect with others in the same situation and share burdens. After a couple of abortive attempts to find what I wanted, I answered an ad for the Hill St. house, where I met Margie.

That was three years ago, the naive beginnings, rooted in my mother-passion. Sharing parenting was a way to give emotional room to my child, to free her from my need and my overwhelming presence. It was a conscious, painful process of letting go, of watching others grow in importance and voice in her life. I listened, often awkwardly, to what they said. It was important to listen more than speak.

Once, when I was in the middle of setting up a second community house, at a time when ladders and paint cans filled most of the rooms, Marisa stayed away from home for a week, by choice. She rotated between her father's and the Hill St. house. There was no fanfare—every day she simply made other plans. That time was painful for me, until I finally understood that our new house was not yet home to her. For a child of 3½ who had been through so much physical upheaval already in her life, she was coping very well by avoiding more chaos. After we had finished the painting and set up her room, she returned, unruffled. I was the wreck.

By parenting collectively I learn what it is like when children have real choices. I am often the one who needs the help and care to deal with my problems around what she does. It's a moment of small triumph and growth when we go together to see how much Skipper dolls cost!

ABOUT PROBLEMS

BY Marisa

I solve it.
I tell it first to somebody else if my mom's not there... yes, they listen. Most of the time... sometimes they don't.

I really wanted a Skipper doll. People say, I'm not going to buy it for you, you can save your money.

But I want it. I don't care if other people don't like it... since I was three I've been wanting one, and no one took me serious.

I told them. Finally Margie and my mom took me to the store.

ON WOMAN SPACE

by Margie

Coming home from the recent midwest MNS gathering I found myself incredibly hungry for the healing and nurturance that I've come to call women's space. It's a new thing for me to realize I need it.

Divorced after nine years of marriage, I've experienced a growing image of myself as being at ease with most people, able to climb into many different emotional realities, the one who stayed in a "mixed" house nervously watching several of my dearest women friends setting up a separatist lesbian house.

Somehow I missed the era of the consciousness raising group. So, when I chose to be in all women's support groups at MNS gatherings I did so initially out of my intellectual understandings about feminism. The sharing in these groups was profoundly different from anything I had ever experienced. I didn't have to watch out for everyone else or spend energy in protective devices against male dominance or flirtations. Attention was available for me without hidden motives and I learned to trust it and listen to my own voice.

What I've since discovered about myself in the context of a feminist family is that I am both vulnerably tender and tough. I've learned many survival tactics for the man's world, some of which are no longer needed and should be left behind. My women/sister/friends have extended themselves to me and provided the safety that allows me to *be* instead of *do* for a while, emerging with a new woman-identified self. The growth of a feminist culture, especially music and poetry, nurtures and gives power to my new found self.

POEMS AND ESSAYS

ON PARENTING

by Iris

I am the kind of person who can pick up an egg without breaking it, I am good to have around in a crisis—like growing old together or raising children. This community offers me a place to be with children in the ways that are good for me and also for them. As a person who made a conscious decision not to reproduce, I realized that I had a lot of love and nurturance to offer and no place to go with that. It is true that parents have no monopoly on love or affection and in some instances can be “frazzled” or overwhelmed by the impact of the constant responsibility that is part of living with children. Too often in this society all child nurturing is placed upon the mother and I knew that was not only unfair, but did not tap a vital resource, me. The experience of being a coordinator for a day care center gave me plenty of chances to share, learn and decide that 25 children, five days a week wasn't the best use of my energy either.

Now there are two children in this family and a third who is part of our extended community and I enjoy the opportunity to share in fixing breakfasts, looking for shoes, and explaining that I'm not a “daddy” but I really love them and will still be here next year too. Sure, I've opened myself up to new feelings—like learning how to let go of them so they can dream and wander and go and grow. I have also allowed myself to feel the caring and trusting that only a four year old can offer. Trying to empower the children to become self-confident and value their own existence has been helpful to me. I have become much clearer about my commitments and expanded my perspective, while giving my love to ones I can be easy and fun with, the children.



ON WORK

by Theo

Many Hands gives me a chance to explore acquiring carpentry skills. I've always liked putting things together, but I've found I have feelings that “I can't do carpentry.” I understand that the source of these feelings is my socialization as a woman, but sometimes they're hard to overcome. When I run up against a difficulty in carpentry work, I am amazed at the “oh give up” response I have at a gut level. I struggle hard to fight that response. Many Hands provides a nurturing atmosphere to struggle in. When I get discouraged, I can turn to someone for support and know that they won't take my discouragement as evidence that women aren't meant to do carpentry work. Slowly, I'm learning. As I learn more, I gain more confidence. It is empowering to feel “yes, I can do it.” Eventually I want to share my skills with other women. The feelings of self-worth and independence are too good to keep all to myself.

TO IRIS

by Michael

*In protective hesitancy
and long buried want,
I want from you
and look back.*

*And through my fear
of crazy entanglement,
I see a man-sister—
sharer of my struggle,
bearer of my pain,
healer of my need.*

*Our fragility stifles me.
Too bold an offering
threatens a sinking
of our tender bond.*

*Will you trust me to grow—
to unfold my scaled wings
before your naked reaching,
to slowly step
into your embrace?*

COMMUNITY LIFE AT "YOUNGEST DAUGHTER"

HOW ONE MNS HOUSE RUNS ITSELF

by Cynthia Arvio

Last year some friends of mine had the sad experience of seeing their communal house, which had been run on the principles of "good will" and "letting things flow," fall apart. Wanting to start again on a firmer footing, they asked me for some suggestions. I wrote this account for them of the specifics which hold our life together. This system may appear rigid, but it doesn't feel that way in practice. It's a nice framework in which people can relax and know that essentials will get done—and on time, too!

1: House Meeting

We hold one each week on the same night. Priority is given to these meetings (or other things can easily intrude).

Facilitation: we always have a facilitator who sees that things go along well. S/he comes prepared with large paper, magic marker and tape to make an agenda and stick it to the wall. S/he watches to see that things get done in the time agreed upon and also watches people's feelings. S/he might ask: Are we finished with that item? John, did you say all you wanted to? We decided to get mouse traps; who will buy them?

Along with everybody else, s/he helps to build the agenda for the evening and decide how long things should take. How much business is there? If business will take about 45 minutes, we could have an hour of personal sharing and a 10-minute break and be done at 10 o'clock—is that okay with everybody?

A typical agenda might look like this:

Excitement sharing

*Agenda building (or agenda review,
if there is one already)*

Personal sharing

Break

Business:

garbage

taxes

mice

guests

Evaluation

Excitement sharing is a brief account of one exciting or good thing that has happened to each person since the last meeting. It helps to bring people together and to start the meeting on a positive note.

Personal sharing is longer, 5 to 10 minutes each, on what's happening in our lives now, how we are feeling; or maybe something about our backgrounds to help people understand each other better. *Sharing is just as important to us as business.* Timekeeping is important here, so no one monopolizes.

*Sharing is just as important to us as
business.*

Business decisions are made by consensus, not voting. If no consensus is reached, an item can be put off till next week. Sometimes an item raises emotions the first week, but by the second it is resolved fairly easily. People often take responsibility for an item, saying, I'll set the mouse traps—and empty them! I'll get a new key made, etc.

Evaluation: at the end of every meeting we have a five-minute evaluation of *process*, not content. First, what went well?

*The facilitator did a good job of keeping us
within the time.*

I liked Charlie's humor; it cheered me up.

I feel closer to people now.

*The mice issue got solved more easily than I
thought it would.*

Next, what could have gone better?

*If somebody wants to bring up an item, they
should know the facts beforehand—about the taxes, for
instance.*

*People might feel closer together if we held the
meeting in a smaller room.*

*Next time, let's keep the dogs out of the meeting
room!*

*We should have taken the phone off the hook at
the beginning of the meeting.*



Breaks: if a meeting is long, say 2 hours, we always have a break for coffee, getting circulation going a bit, a group hug, etc.

Gripe sessions: Once in a while we have what we call "hypes and gripes." It's a short session with

—five minutes for anyone to say anything good about the community, such as "It's great to be back," "The place looks better and better," "Mabel's meals have improved."

—five minutes for any gripes, without anyone answering back, such as: "I hate it when people leave hairs in the sink," or "The garbage stinks when the cover is left off," or "There hasn't been enough food around lately," or "It's so noisy after twelve I can't go to sleep."

—five minutes for any answers, such as "Sorry about the food, I'm going shopping tomorrow," or "I know I was shouting around recently pretty late, I'll try to keep it down," or "I'll empty the garbage can more often." But you don't have to answer if you don't want to.

A gripes and hypes session often ends with a group hug. We really do like each other...

2. Jobs

We divide jobs into three categories: house cleaning, miscellaneous, and cooking and clean-up.

House cleaning is now done during house meetings, right after excitement sharing and before anything else. We take a half hour to do such chores as washing the kitchen floor, vacuuming the living room, sweeping the halls and stairs, cleaning the bathrooms. Those who are through early help the others.

At house meetings we sign up for miscellaneous jobs, which are kept for a month at a time. Example: cleaning refrigerators, making bread or yogurt, yard and porch clean-up, cleaning stove, finances, trash, food shopping and management. A sign-up sheet is posted in a prominent place in the kitchen, so people don't forget whose responsibility is whose.

We have a dinner sign-up sheet also. It includes cook, guests, and absences. The cook is also the dishwasher for that night, but everybody helps clear the table, put away and food, and wipe up the crumbs.

3. Guests

Guests for meals are welcome anytime. They are signed up on the sheet so the cook can plan for the meal.

Overnight guests usually pay something into the food kitty for food and overhead (or the person inviting them does). \$2 is considered fair per day.

If guests are going to stay more than one or two nights, it's usual to ask the house about it at a meeting beforehand. "Can Joan stay in your room all next week while you're in Vermont?" "Can Tony use our sofa for a couple of nights?" Sometimes someone will say, "I'm so sick of company I could scream. Let's not have any for a while."

4. Money

We pay "rent" separately from food money. Rent goes to the treasurer each month and covers mortgage and taxes, utilities, repairs, house supplies (other than supermarket stuff). We pay \$55 per month per person.

Food money (\$8 per week per person) goes directly into the kitty. Shopper takes out money when it's time to go to the store. There is a card in the kitty box on which to check off what you've paid in. If you're out of town, you may deduct \$1 for each day away, but if you're just eating in another house or downtown, you don't deduct anything.

Sometimes someone will say, "I'm so sick of company I could scream."

Telephone: The house pays for the basic rate. Any long-distance calls are signed up on a sheet near the phone. The treasurer collects the money each month.

5. Work Days

Every month on an average, the house has a work day, planned well in advance. The date then has priority over everything else. Examples of work done: painting, spring cleaning, window washing, cleaning out basement, cleaning yard, repairs.

6. Conflict

Inevitably, conflicts arise among house members: one is very neat, another messy; one quiet, another noisy. One may be extremely political, another less so. More serious conflicts: triangle relationships.

Usually the two people first talk, try to work it out. Sometimes it helps for them to have a personal conversation that's not about the problem, so they feel good about each other as people and see the problem in that perspective. If that still doesn't solve it, they can bring the problem to house meeting for suggestions and support. Usually in that case the group wants to check up the next time to see how things are going.

We assume people are counseling (re-evaluation counseling; see editorial) on their feelings about each other, with their separate counselors. Sometimes people may want to work on their relationship with each other through a "relationship counseling session" with a third person.

7. New Members

If a new person wants to move in, it's important for us to get to know him/her well enough beforehand so we are each pretty sure it will work out. We invite him/her to dinner a few times, and we each talk privately with him/her, sharing relevant information and feelings. If everybody likes the person, a clearness meeting is set up.

Clearness: this is a serious attempt to find out if the new person's needs and expectations for community fit in with those of the present members; and what any problems might be. Time is set aside to hear about the person's background and goals.

Questions that might be asked: How much time do you envision having for the house and its members? Are you accustomed to getting along with other people in a living situation? Are you willing to be open about your feelings and problems and share them with other members? Are you willing to do your share of the work on a regular basis? Are you clear about egalitarian and non-sexist behavior? How are you going to support yourself?

People share how they feel about each other, and if a personality problem is sensed, it is discussed. Some things don't come up till later, but if an open spirit has been established, they can be discussed then.

After Charlie expresses (to Don) his anger toward Mabel, he feels better and plans to have a frank talk with Mabel.

Life is not all political struggle, or garbage, or mousetraps!

If everyone is clear, the person can move in. If anyone has genuine doubts, s/he does *not* move in. But since rejection can be a shattering experience, we try to do enough groundwork before the meeting to be reasonably certain that the person will be accepted.

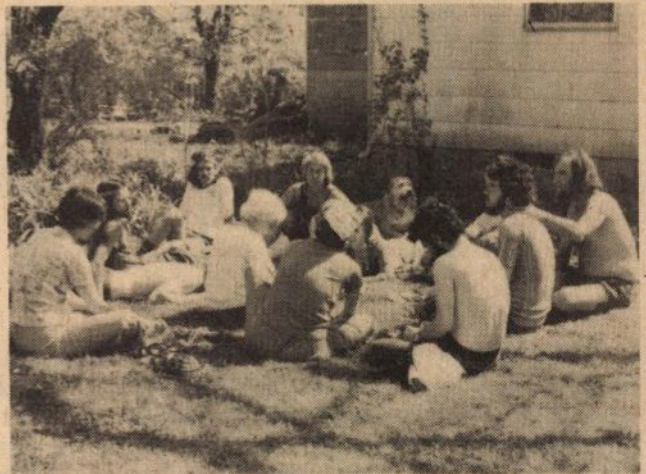
We feel, also, that it's important to have fellow members who are similar in beliefs about politics and social change, for two reasons: to avoid unnecessary conflict, and to provide a supportive environment. Home should not be a place of argument over basics.

8. Dealing with feelings

To ease tensions or to clear up depression, we feel free to ask a fellow member for time to talk, cry, etc., in private. The fellow member acts as a good listener, is supportive, but doesn't give advice. What is said is confidential. Anything is acceptable, any emotion or expression, and it's understood that it's just clearing away feelings. After Charlie expresses (to Don) his anger toward Mabel, he feels better and plans to have a frank talk with Mabel from a more rational perspective. We try not to "dump" our feelings on other people without their permission! But if, by chance, an emotional issue makes a person cry in meeting, everybody else is most supportive.

7. Fun

We often play games together, drink beer and do puzzles, play Pounce or Scrabble, sometimes have parties, go places together. Life is not all political struggle, or garbage, or mouse traps. Community building! □



WONDERFUL OLDER WOMEN

Wonderful, Wonderful Older Women
(tune - Wonderful Copenhagen)

*Wonderful, wonderful older women, Wonderful women
are we.*

*And we're here to say that we're on our way
Breaking chains and flying free.*

*We are the women who've born the children,
Cooked, and cleaned, and cried.*

*but we're learning how to be changing now,
And we're wonderful women, wonderful women,
wonderful women, we're WOW!*

Ruth Dreamdigger



20 The young person yells, *Go it, gran-ma*, as I ride my bicycle along the city street. *But you're too old to wear your hair that way*, says the precocious four-year-old squinting at my straight, grey hair, cut in a buster-brown style. *You look so young*, says the well-meaning friend.

And to all of them I feel like shouting, *No, no, no! Stop the stereotyping! Stop the categorizing! Stop the patronizing! And stop devaluing the years of my living!* For these are some of the ways in which people, confused by societal myths, try to smother me in my 57 years.

With 28 years of mothering behind me (loving, thinking, planning for others) I figure that I have about 28 years of dream-digging ahead of me. (I chose the name *Dreamdigger* because it tells me who I am, just as surnames were meant originally to do. I am a dreamer in two ways: I try to understand my sleeping dreams, and I also have a life-long dream of a loving society. I am a digger into my own personality, into whatever work I do, and also in the earth.) I don't relish society dragging me down by loading old patterns on me. But realistically I know that the fight to be myself - not *grandma*, not *mother*, not *little old lady in tennis shoes* - will take up much of the energy of those 28 years.

History (or herstory, as I say now) is powerfully against me. Down through the centuries older women have been stereotyped and persecuted just as have been the Blacks and Jews. As termagants, gossips, witches, they have been dunked, burned, stoned. As mothers to grown men, grandmas to young people, ancient aunts, and sweet old ladies, they have been deposited in rocking chairs, kept in upstairs rooms, patronized and pressed into depression and alcoholism. (I heard on the radio just today, *Grandmothers don't have to do anything. They just have to be there.*) They have been feared for their power and ridiculed for their ineptitude. And occasionally they have been revered as Wise Old Women.

But the rising tide of expectations has caught up older women just as it has caught up other oppressed groups. A mind-boggling thought has entered our heads: *We don't have to take the role assigned to us!* Freed from the straight-jacket in which motherhood held many of us, we are looking twice and warily at the new garment which society holds out to us. No, thank you kindly, we are not going to be little old ladies!

So, what are we going to be then? We are going to be artists, workers, musicians, scholars, revolutionaries, speakers, organizers, travelers, lovers, gardeners, writers. In short, we will do everything that everybody else does (except that maybe we won't do quite so much laundry, house-cleaning, and child-care!).

How will we do it? First of all we will search for ourselves beneath the layers which have been laid upon us as children, as young women, as wives and mothers, as single women. We will use for that purpose every tool that seems right for us - consciousness raising, professional counseling (warily) peer counseling, dream groups, and whatever else our fertile brains discover. (Our peer counseling method is Re-evaluation Counseling. It's been immensely important to us. For information you can write RC, 719 Second Avenue North, Seattle, WA 98109... We started our dream group after reading *Dream Power* and *The Dream Game*, both by Ann Faraday-Coward, McCann & Geoghegan and Harper & Row respectively. The members of the group never press an interpretation upon the dreamer but make suggestions which are often right on target. Since dreams are very personal, trust is absolutely essential.)

Secondly, we will band together for support, for the exchange of ideas, and for **empowerment**. I write that in bold letters because it is hard for me to think of having power -- in my own life, in the world of ideas, in the effort to shake up the patriarchal structure -- but

empowerment is what I work toward, not *in spite of* being an older woman, but *because* I am an older woman with the variety of strengths I have acquired in my life struggle.

In the Movement for a New Society that banding together has come about through a collective known as WOW (Wonderful Older Women). We gathered together a little over a year ago. As I think back to those first rather sporadic meetings, I am amazed at the number of ways in which we showed our lack of confidence in ourselves and in each other. But we persevered, knowing that we did have it within ourselves to be supportive of each other. As we taped our herstories in those early days, I noted that one woman spoke only about her family, not one word about herself. We brainstormed the negative ideas that we feel other people have of us, and then we brainstormed the qualities that we know we have as vibrant, caring, thoughtful human beings. We discussed papers which had been written by other members of the MNS community. We planned a picnic together.

But I think that the event which either marked or evoked the change in us from a collection of frightened and frustrated individuals to a collective of women who saw themselves as a potential force in the community was a weekend retreat after we had been meeting for several months. Here was a group of women who had spent almost all of their lives nourishing and supporting other people. Here we were all together, without any children to nourish and support, without any men to nourish and support, and we did an amazing job of nourishing and supporting each other. When we drove back together we knew that a change had occurred. Although we didn't become *officially* an MNS collective until many months later, we ourselves knew from that weekend that we were indeed a collective of Wonderful Older Women.

We decided to set ourselves the task of writing. Most of us have tremendous blocks about seeing ourselves as writers. But by using a process of group writing developed by some people within the MNS community, we are getting over that hurdle. Our paper will be about social change from our felt needs as older women. [*For a copy, write to the WOW Collective, 4600 Springfield Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19143.*] We have brainstormed our herstories, our struggles, our oppressions, and we have started to talk and listen in small groups which will then give us encouragement as each puts together the thoughts which have emerged. When we have completed the writing on these three sections, we will work together on strategy.

In the fall the Continental Walk for Disarmament and Social Justice came through Philadelphia. One of our members was on the organizing committee and asked WOW to lead the singing. We felt a little uneasy, but not undone, to find that we were preceded by professional singers! But it was soon apparent that we were a hit. With our arms around each other, supporting each other both physically and psychologically, we sang with such thorough enjoyment of this new experience that everyone caught our enthusiasm. It was our vitality which carried the occasion, vitality which has much more to do with lack of fear than with age.

Our most recent challenge was a speak-out to MNS women about the ways in which we have to deal with discrimination even in this revolutionary community. [*In a speak-out, the members of an oppressed group speak their feelings freely without response by the listeners. After the speak-out the listeners can meet in small groups to express their feelings out of hearing of the speak-out members.*] We often feel invisible, are not taken seriously. We have difficulty in joining communal households. The struggles of our lives are not acknowledged, our efforts to rid ourselves of old survival patterns are unappreciated, our achievements are unrecognized. And in ways more subtle than in the world at large we are still stereotyped, categorized, patronized, and the years of our lives treated like a disease. But the younger MNS women did hear us, and did begin to understand the importance of coming to terms with us, with their own mothers, and with the fact that they, too, will sometime be *older*. (The MNS community has been the best growing place we have seen for older women, but, in the words of the feminist song, *We still ain't satisfied*.)

Our next effort will be in the form of a responsibility for the *Orientation Weekend* which Philadelphia MNS schedules every month. People who share in this experience learn a little about MNS analysis, vision and strategy, living in community, macro-analysis, training and action. The WOW Collective has agreed to organize and facilitate a weekend. It is the first time that we have worked together as organizers of more than an evening meeting.

These are the visible actions which we are taking, but the psychological strength we have received from each other since the retreat is most important of all. Older women often support and comfort each other in times of trial. It is less often that they have supported each other to be assertive in getting what they want, need and deserve. We remain individuals and rejoice in our individuality. This is important because society tends to lump all older women together in one big blob of a stereotype. We encourage each other to stand up for our rights, to be different when we want to be, to try new jobs, to travel, to lead workshops.

We constantly remind each other that the phrase *personal is political* is particularly relevant for us. Each time we show that our old age is a fine time of life, we give a younger woman hope and energy. Each time that we disprove a myth about older women, we are performing a political act. For myths about the way groups of people *should* be are glue which holds together society when it is not truly functional. Each time that we refuse to be *mother* to a grown person, we are undermining the structure which imprisons women and maintains men in false responsibility patterns. Mothers can be considered one of the classes of people on whom capitalism depends. Men who carry huge amounts of responsibility (and in a patriarchal system almost every man feels that he does) must have someone to *take care* of them, someone with whom they can be little boys. Each time that we refuse to absorb the tensions of dog-eat-dog economy, we throw a monkey wrench into the capitalist society, which, with its emphasis on competition, is certain to create tremendous pressures. When women

refuse to take the mother role, the system will have to change to accommodate reasonable sharing of responsibility. The secretary on the job and the wife or mother at home are the ones who soften life for those who function within it, whether they are busy executive, ambitious young man, or worker bedevilled by his foreman. It is hard for us as older women to stop being that shock absorber because we have done it for so long, but as we see more clearly how we are used, we can say *No!*

Today while I waited for the trolley I sang this little ditty to myself. Maybe it will feel good to you, as it did to me.

*I'm gonna free myself to sing about myself
Sing about myself, sing about myself,
I'm gonna free myself to sing about myself,
'Cause singing is what I need for me.*

I also decided that I needed to cry, dance, think, howl, shout and laugh about myself. How about you?



Suggestions for Ourselves as Older Women

- Affirm our past and plan our future*
- Take care of our bodies*
- Respect our capacity for clear thinking*
- Recognize the unique beauty of older women*
- Form a support-action group with older women, but form friendships in a wide age spectrum*
- Expect to be taken seriously*
- Be ready for new ideas and new loyalties*
- Expect sexual and sensual pleasure*
- Undertake some structure or discipline in which personal growth will take place*
- Look for new areas of competence*
- Please ourselves in clothing, habits and life style even if [especially if] our choices do not fit society's image of the older woman* □

AN OFFSHOOT-

PHILADELPHIA TO VERMONT

Rachel Bedard

Loading up the car and van until they sagged, the eight drove three hours north, unpacked, and began again.

They were some of the most experienced trainers, the most travelled organizers of MNS. Some of them had jobs enough "in the movement" to do only movement work and to share their income with others. One had enough contacts to be welcomed in any part of the United States.

Every one of them was known—for puppet shows, for singing, for training and organizing, for support of African liberation, for writing, editing, speaking. They were "solid" members of the Life Center community and had many close friends in Philadelphia. What led them to settle in a small, isolated Vermont town?

Originally, when they had come to Philadelphia as individuals, none had wanted to make it a long-term home. They subscribed to the idea that spreading MNS skills—in group process, long-term movement planning, community building, and nonviolent theory—meant developing outposts in many different areas and decentralizing the work that had begun in Philadelphia. In addition, they thought that in a smaller city they could get a better grasp of the situation as a whole than they could in Philadelphia.

One of the tenets of the Philadelphia Life Center has been that people come together here for training, get experience, and move out. For the first several years, that was more a philosophy than an actuality. Instead the community here grew and grew—from thirty to over one hundred people. A few individuals left, but their energies faded when they plunked themselves down alone in situations that came nowhere near the cultural, personal support of the Life Center, or where they were surrounded by entirely different kinds of movement organizing. It was clear that to sustain MNS style and energy in other places, groups of people needed to leave together. MNS is a movement of groups.

The Vermont group was the first to take that plunge intentionally, making MNS history and seeing itself somewhat self-consciously as a model. And it was, in part, the notion of movement-building that encouraged them to leave.

There were other reasons, too.

"I want to live in a smaller city than Philadelphia," said Sarah, "with ready access to beautiful countryside."

Stephen said, "I'd like to live in New England, within a few hours of my family in St. Johnsbury."

Preliminary talks lasted over a year. At first everyone had an idea about where to go: the Northwest, where organizing had begun early in MNS history but had gradually faded out as the MNSers there joined other, already established movement organizations; the South, the home of three of the people; the Southeast, a new-found love of two others and a place where there was rising interest in MNS; and New England, the home of one of the members, where a self-starting MNS network already existed.

Gradually, they narrowed locations down to the Southeast and New England, the two most accessible to Philadelphia. The decision was based on "needs" and preferences. Shortly before the move out of Philadelphia, the group agreed to focus on New England.



They were "solid" members of the Life Center community and had many close friends in Philadelphia. What led them to settle in a small, isolated Vermont town?

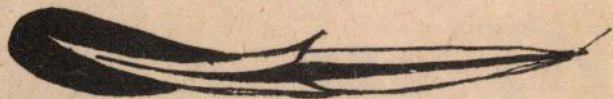
Who Are They?

The group initially was composed of two school-aged people (Sarah, 15, and Lon, 11), and four adults (Susanne, Peter, Stephen and Rachel). Because Susanne, Peter, and Stephen shared training work as their major occupation, they were afraid that the group as a whole wouldn't be diverse enough to be successful and that it wouldn't offer enough support for Rachel, who was mostly involved in communications and "outreach." They began to expand the size of the group.

Scott, a close friend and co-worker of Rachel, agreed—after much deliberation—to join the group. He made a choice between it and another, less well-formed at the time, which was leaning toward settling in the Southeast.

Bonnie, a housemate of Susanne, Sarah and Lon, also joined. She had done various kinds of organizing in Philadelphia, chiefly with an action group supporting the liberation of Namibia in southwest Africa. She was looking for a way to center and focus her energies more and wanted to move away from Philadelphia. The small size of the group appealed to her.

Cynthia, a writer and editor, also joined the group. She had worked with Rachel in two different collectives; they shared a close friendship, an interest in dream analysis, and a feminism-first perspective.



Building the Group's Solidarity

The members of the group met periodically through the fall of '75, and by the time the new year began they were anxious to pick up momentum and develop plans they could act on by summer. "Not another summer in Philadelphia!" became a rallying cry.

Each week they did some thinking about criteria for their new location, and what to focus on when they got there. Each week they also spent some time having fun together. When they came to the point of wanting feedback from friends and co-workers, they set up a clearness panel of six to eight people to give them input and to query them on their motives and their ideas. In spite of friends' reluctance to see them go—the *gaps* they would leave in the fabric of the community!—they were encouraged to set out and make an impact elsewhere.

Questions Toward Clearness for the Group

Did it make sense to leave Philadelphia? The group's answer was a simple yes. With over a hundred participants and more than a dozen work collectives, Philadelphia did not require their presence. Many of the group felt that the energy it took to relate to so many people left little time for or interest in reaching outside the bounds of the Life Center. Some said that they could be a model and an encouragement for other "affinity" groups to move out of Philadelphia, spread MNS, and leave the Philadelphia community a more stable and manageable size.

Should they decide where to go before moving out of the city? The group itself thought no, though the clearness committee encouraged them to change their minds. Their process would be to select a region, and find a place to live temporarily and to search from. They would analyze each possible location according to some criteria they had established (no larger than 50,000; available jobs; within a day's drive of Philadelphia) and choose the best option and move there. They would take several months to go through this organic process.

Did they see themselves as an MNS group? Yes!

Should they decide where to go before moving out of the city?

What were the lines of emotional support within the group? This question was not answered as fully as others, and resulted in some problems. There seemed to be two small clusters within the larger group. This took a while to identify and a long while for people to feel comfortable about it. There were couples within the group, which left some people out. There was not much gay consciousness. But the group did seem well-rounded enough and the people in it strong enough to find adequate support.

Some of the clearness questions were left unanswered. What became clear was the real desire on the part of all these people to leave the hugeness of Philadelphia and the large MNS community here and to start from scratch in another area. This is what they eventually did, in early July, 1976.

Individuals had looked at a couple of places as much as nine months before, the Community for Non-violent Action farm in Connecticut and a Brattleboro, Vermont, group of MNS-related people. But both these places had a lot going on already through other movement organizations, and this group wanted rather to break new ground than to "compete" with other activist groups. When a friend offered to let them share a house on a piece of land trust property in Putney, Vermont, they began their search from there.

The strongest interest expressed by the group was in sinking roots and organizing locally. They studied the New England area's industrial cities and towns. In twos and threes, they collected data on employment, working class populations, movement activities, re-evaluation counseling communities, and other aspects of the cities they visited. In the end Burlington, Vermont, and Fitchburg, Massachusetts, became the strongest possibilities. A couple of days' intensive consideration of the data they had gathered about these two places and the feelings each had about them resulted in a decision to move to Burlington, a university town of about 40,000 on the shores of Lake Champlain in northwestern Vermont. Housing there, however, proved to be very tight. Their camping-style living accommodations couldn't be continued into the fall, as it gets cold in Vermont very early.

Luckily, Stephen's aunt and uncle offered to rent the group a small house on the family land near St. Johnsbury, a small town of 8,000 a couple of hours east of Burlington. Loading up the car and van until they sagged, the eight drove three hours north, unpacked, and began again.

Settling in St. Johnsbury

St. Johnsbury was to be a temporary resting spot, near enough to Burlington to visit frequently and look around for housing. There, on Steve's family's land, they found very cheap housing, a good vantage point for studying the Vermont area, and, they hoped, enough work to see them through the winter.

The country air agreed with them. They did carpentry and painting work on the farm and in town. They helped out a neighboring farmer and gradually got to know more people in St. Johnsbury. By early 1977, they decided to give up the idea of Burlington, move down the road to an old house Steve's family had given him, expand it somewhat, and settle down in the area.

Getting Work

Though unemployment is high in Vermont, jobs seemed to be available to the members of the group in many different facets of town and country life. At first they all worked at carpentry and painting projects on the farm. Eventually, they spread outward.



In exchange for Lon's tuition at a progressive school in nearby Danville, Sarah (who graduated from

high school in December, 1976) and Steve teach a course. Scott, who volunteered labor at a nearby farmer's place in the fall, started working full-time with him in the spring. Bonnie and Scott both worked on a maple sugaring operation in March; Bonnie also does valuable part-time work at a town day care center. Susanne has joined the writing staff of the *Caledonian Record*, the St. Johnsbury newspaper. Peter works in Danville as coordinator of a health care program. Stephen has been working as staff at a youth center in St. Johnsbury.

Every member of the group has experienced some degree of "separation trauma" from the move out of Philadelphia.

The group seems to be working itself into the fiber of life in that small town. They are beginning to introduce some of their movement skills. Steve and Susanne teach a course in re-evaluation counseling, an empowering peer counseling technique; Peter assists in a class 35 miles away. The course Steve and Sarah teach at Lon's school is in "life-planning," also an impetus toward "taking charge" of one's life. All the adults have been doing workshops in prisons, in New York State and elsewhere, trying to develop strength in the movement for penal reform. Scott and Bonnie are organizing an "outreach" movement in northern New England, finding out who the movement activists are and beginning to develop a network. The group as a whole is writing and editing several issues of the MNS newsletter.

What Became of Cynthia and Rachel?

Every member of the group has experienced some degree of "separation trauma" from the move out of Philadelphia. For most, the changes have resulted in a gradual sense of belonging and of excitement at living in a beautiful small town.

But two of the members opted for continuing to live in Philadelphia. Rachel stayed with the Philadelphia feminist collective and helped to start a women's house in the Life Center. Cynthia discovered that she was more a city than a country person and returned to Philadelphia after a few weeks to rejoin the feminist collective and continue her life in the larger community.

Onward

They have done well in using the resources they have available. Steve's family is talking about including them in its long-range plans for use of the land. The old house the group is taking over, with its fine gardening land, is now going to be well-used. Each of the people is finding a niche in the community where s/he can work, earn money, and meet people. And they are increasing their list of contacts all the time. Who knows? Maybe by 1980 they'll be an established social change group in Vermont.

MEN AGAINST PATRIARCHY

Kenn Arning

"Gee, nothing is happening here for men," said Kenn, "no support, and all these challenges from feminist women!"

"It sure is a relief to find a men's collective and a gay caucus here as I move into the Life Center," said Jeff.

These quotes come two years apart. There has been a lot of growth here in men's activities over the past two years. At last there is a group of men who are really committed to work against sexism.

(Sexism: that dread disease that attacks all of us, every woman, child and man in society. Women suffer the effects of it far more deeply and painfully than men, but its hold is upon us all. From the moment we are born, with the pale blue or blooming pink baby blankets of our first day, we are conditioned into gender roles: the expectations of certain behavior because of our genitals. Sex role conditioning continues throughout the rest of our lives; sure, some folks get a heavier dose of it than others, but it's real for all of us).

My commitment to work against sexism began one evening in January, 1975, at a workshop put on by the MNS Long-term Training Program. A big conflict erupted at that meeting: several women refused to listen to the men any more! The women in the room got together, as women, for the first time. The other men and I felt helpless as our sole means of emotional support turned their backs on us, to talk only to their sisters.

After my flood of strong feelings subsided, I decided to

take direct action: I organized a group of men to put together a men's workshop to look at sexism, explore ways of supporting each other, and support the women's movement.

The first men's workshop was a grand success. All the men who attended got a sense of closeness and brotherhood, recognized some of the subtler forms of sexism, and learned how to begin looking to men for support and play. Another men's workshop was held six months later, then a year later a third.

In June 1976 six of the men who had helped plan the Life Center men's workshops formed Men Against Patriarchy, a collective that joined Movement for a New Society a few months later. All were close friends and had lived in the Life Center a while, three of them since its beginning. They are Kenn Arning, Peter Blood, Firefly, George Lakey, Doug Trout and Alan Tuttle. Three of them come from working class backgrounds. All but one of them, at various levels, are exploring gayness. All but one of them either lives with children or earns his living being with children. All of them have had close friends in the lesbian-feminist movement. All of them are currently in the process of writing articles, like this one, on patriarchy, the men's movement or an analysis of sexism.

In the fall of 1976 M.A.P. held a series of three men's workshops. One focused on how gays and non-gays can work together, on on sexism and the class struggle, and one on moving beyond sex roles. Approximately 25 men attended each workshop, mostly from the Philadelphia



*I am hungry for you, frightened friend.
Your maleness stinks like mine
Of parasite love,
Emotion-greed and woman need.
I feel your heart
Washed in salt-teared anger-love.
The baptism, and shuddering start.
Oh god, won't you hold me brother!
While I weep there is no other.
And together now, and then reborn,
Hand held tender-strong
Against this anger-storm,
We walk away
From the tangled empty words
Of which our injured sisters warned.
Our road leaves fear behind
And all the rest remains:
The struggle to make us free,
The will to leave them be.*

David Butler Perry
Durango, July 1976

area, from a wide range of backgrounds and political activities. Our idea was that these workshops would be a catalyst for a larger men's movement developing in the Philadelphia area.

Men Against Patriarchy is now in the process of developing a long-range strategy for a Philadelphia men's movement. We are hoping to initiate a campaign--or join a present one--focused on an issue like women's street safety, pregnancy leaves from jobs, or something else which will rally public attention. M.A.P. plans to continue doing men's workshops and expand into a larger men's organization.

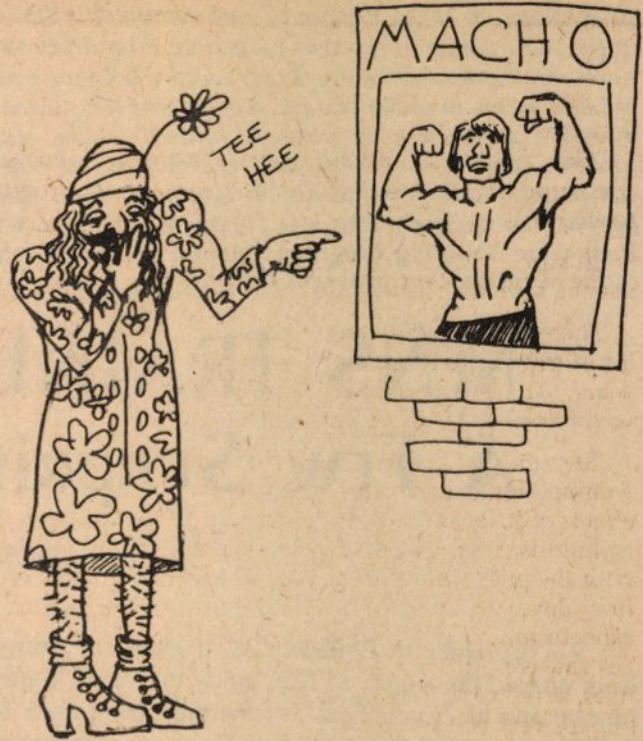
The men's movement in the Philadelphia Life Center is personal as well as political. Many of the men see each other frequently through their communal living or through working collectively. Jeff had a birthday recently; he invited all his male friends to his room that evening to sing and to share positive memories they had of him. After the personal sharing, they all went downtown to a bar and danced. Jeff wanted to share that evening with some of the men in his life in a celebrative, personal way.

The men here support each other by challenging one another when they see sexist behavior, however subtle. A friend of mine, Peter, often gets into the role of talking a lot in meetings, not giving space to others to share their viewpoints and feelings, as if he has an answer for everything. I have talked to Peter after some meetings, to inquire what was going on with him that made him feel as if he had to talk that way. He heard my message as one of caring concern, not a putdown. He and I tried to think together of a creative way to interrupt him when he falls into that stereotyped male behavior.

Why am I concerned with a men's movement? I have to be, when I see the shape of things without one. Nearly every man I meet and talk with feels personally estranged from other men and in subtle competition with them. Most men don't feel competent giving to and receiving emotional support from men. So many men think that the only way they can express their sexuality is with women. Most men don't know how to have fun and really let go, be loose with other men. If they spend time with a man 10 or twenty or thirty years different in age from themselves, they tend to put that man in either the father or the son role, not seeing him as an equal brother.

The whole other half of the picture is how men relate to women. So many men use words that project women as inferior, second class or less worthy than men. Not only words, but behavior, body language, and lifestyles tend to keep women down. Women in our society are constantly subjected to male domination in jobs, schooling, and the male cult of violence and war. The fear of rape is very real for all women in this male culture.

I believe it is important for each of us to look at our inward selves and our outward behavior and see how to relate to others. Are we just the way our parents were and the schools taught us to be, or are we serving as models of how humans can be? □



I DON'T WANT YOUR JOHN WAYNE IMAGE
(Tune: I don't want your millions, Mister)

I don't want your John Wayne Image
I don't want to dominate.
I'll just be a human being.
I'm taking back my life again.

I don't want your corporations.
I don't want to rape the land.
Let me live without destroying.
I'm taking back my life again.

I don't want your business office.
I don't want your suit and tie.
I don't want to be valued
By my work until I die.

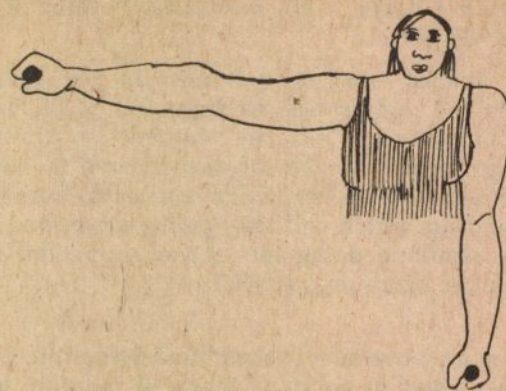
Time has come for a changing image.
All we want's the chance to give
Men and women who want a difference,
Support for alternatives.

I don't want male competition.
I don't want to beat you down.
Let me take your hand and love you,
Taking back my life again.

(Repeat first verse)

—Bruce Kokopeli
Seattle MNS

Philadelphia MNS is active as a training community. Each month we hold an Orientation Weekend for interested people to get a glimpse of our community life, our study, our training for nonviolent action. Four times a year two-week General Training Programs are held for people already active in social change movements who want an intensive experience in personal growth skills, group process, conflict resolution, and building social change campaigns. And each fall a new group of about fifteen people come to live at the Life Center to take part in the Long-term Training Program. Dianna MacLeod writes of the surprises that program held for her.



MNS TRAINING: A FEW SURPRISES...

DIANNA MACLEOD

We had come to Philadelphia, a group of strangers from around the world, to live, study and work together for one year as "Cycle Four" of the Movement for a New Society training program. We had chosen as our symbol a little red wagon, following the lead of Cycle Two's "bicycle" and Cycle Three's "tricycle." We had been attending workshops for two months to learn about organizing, facilitation techniques, and the dynamics of relationships within groups. We had all examined models and examples of conflict resolution.

But now the conflict was among ourselves. People were not attending meetings, weren't informing people ahead of time that they didn't plan to attend; the group seemed too diverse to pull together; there seemed to be huge tensions underlying any discussion. Our "little red wagon" ground to a halt.

Just one week earlier, with a combination of fantasy and desperation, we had drawn a verbal picture of what our commitment to this year-long program might be. We hoped that all of us would come (on time) to all fifteen hours of weekly meetings, notify each other when we couldn't, and attend gatherings to play and relax together. On a deeper level, we hoped to make solid and lasting connections with each other by sharing our feelings publicly rather than nursing our resentments privately, or, worse yet, by withdrawing our energy from each other entirely. We wanted to continue meeting weekly in women's and men's groups to work on overcoming sexist patterns within our group of ten women and six men. We talked of the need to support each other through the difficult times of adjustment to our new environment, to deal with conflict as it arose, to respond to each other's concerns, and to be responsible for asking for what we needed, in order to create an emotionally "safe" place for us to help each

other grow. Our wildest visions included planning and carrying out a social change campaign together, and in doing so, sharing skills and committing ourselves to a balance of political action and personal growth. It felt like a tremendous amount to do. Our goals were especially difficult to reach given our different perspectives on issues of human liberation. Priorities within the group ranged from a strong need for the emergence of women's power, to needs for child care and thinking about childrearing and young people's liberation, to concern for the struggles of people around the world.

The global perspective was particularly important because our group consisted in part of people from Japan, England, Tanzania, Sweden, and Canada. Every group member from outside the United States sensed a kind of cultural imperialism operating within the group, and finally someone said so. We scheduled a session to confront what some called the "American supremacy" in the group.



We had been meeting for almost two months, sometimes for twenty hours a week, and at last this became a concern of the entire group and a major focus for our attention. At this point in the program the group seemed stitched together by delicate and tightly-stretched threads that were in danger of breaking. We made a decision that, if we were to hang together for the next ten months, we needed to attend to the dynamics of our *own* group.

We asked Sandra, a Life Center woman skilled in conflict resolution, to facilitate this special session. We knew that an uninvolved party standing outside our problem could help us to think more clearly about what we needed to do. Although we were aware of at least three different formats for airing feelings and grievances around oppression ("fishbowl," "co-counseling demonstration," and "speak-out"), we chose to use the fishbowl because we thought it would provide the most safety.

The transnational individuals sat in a small, close circle in the middle of the large attic room where we met. The rest of us formed a large ring around this inner one and listened while the others talked to each other as if they were the only ones in the room. And the rest of us, as though we were watching fish swimming in a clear glass bowl, observed our friends, listened, and began our education in the realities of American cultural imperialism.



We listened while Steve, Ulla, Ilse, Sheryl, Ikuko, and Linda related the effects of our unwitting, yet real, exercise of power. We Americans were making arrogant assumptions that effectively excluded fully one-third of the group. Our customary greeting of hugs and hand-holding was unfamiliar and uncomfortable to others. The pace of our discussions was too fast for those whose first language was not English. Our jokes were understood by only a few. The different expressions of feminism among American and transnational women were confusing and frightening, and they had not all been given equal weight. In all these ways, the non-U.S. members had been left out. We saw more clearly the intense contradiction inherent in the training program experience for the transnational members: out of one side of our mouths we U.S.ers spoke the rhetoric of "community building"—warm, close relationships, trust and personal support—and out of the other, we dominated the airspace, denying many the chance to make contributions and to influence our direction.

Some felt that they weren't being heard politically as they tried to point out areas for growth in MNS. Ilse Dahl, who learned about the Life Center while working for Amnesty International in Sweden, is disappointed in the quality of political thought in the program. "I feel people are not aware enough of a political analysis. I would like to see people practicing their vision in their own lives through income sharing and by creating alternative institutions." Sheryl Crown from England agrees, "There is a lack of class perspective and grounding in political theory in the training program. I feel the lack of a revolutionary economic analysis in MNS." Sheryl also feels the term "simple living" is a misnomer in describing the low-consumption lifestyle at the Life Center. She says, "The notion of 'simple living' is a culture shock, because this is middle class living by English standards."

I had seldom experienced responsibility for my own oppressive behavior.

During the fishbowl exercise we *all* began to empathize, remembering times when we had felt left out, or had watched from the sidelines while others made the decisions because we couldn't figure out how to verbalize what we were feeling. After the transnational folks had finished, we broke into pairs to help each other express our reactions on an emotional level.

The fishbowl was an important experience for me. As I heard transnationals describing their invisibility in our group, I was reminded of how I had been frequently and consistently denied the chance to speak, think or act because I was female. However, I had seldom experienced responsibility for my own oppressive behavior. I was especially hurt by the anger I heard directed towards U.S. women in the program from women who had come from other countries. I had always liked to think that I was reaching out to these women, building bridges between women of different countries. Instead, in some ways I had been hurting them.

After a short time, in which some of us did some pretty intense crying, we came back together ready to do practical, rational thinking about ways of countering the patterns of our group in order to create the space and support for everybody to participate fully. Alert and attentive now after allowing our emotions to flow, we suggested continuing to raise consciousness around the ways U.S.ers unknowingly oppress others. We would evolve guidelines to use in sessions, to interrupt domineering behavior. We would remember that the majority of the group comes from a U.S. cultural background and consider the implications of that for our perspective on human liberation struggles. A U.S. identity group would meet to help each other deal with our own cultural imperialism. We would spend more time within the whole group hearing about dif-

"It's somewhat akin to pulling the plant up by its roots to see how it's growing."

terent cultures, peoples, ways of life; celebrating different cultural experiences through songs, poems, stories; taking the time to share concepts and information about U.S. institutions (e.g., our type of prison system); and encouraging transnationals to express their anger when they needed to break out of passivity and invisibility.

One of the basic premises for MNS training is that: "Learning is not neutral. It either serves to domesticate us or to liberate us." (New Society Packet) We operate by consensus and attempt to communicate information, share skills, and provide experiences in ways that empower rather than act upon participants. Basic to all MNS training is that democratic learning processes include an opportunity for feedback, experiential learning, non-oppressive encounters between individuals, and utilization of everyone's thinking.

We had certainly found that *this* group learning experience was not neutral. And we also learned that true consensus must include *all* the participants' thinking. Following MNS adherence to nonviolent confrontation, we had pushed ourselves to communicate past these areas of hurt and inequality, believing that none of us would intentionally oppress any other.

Types of Training

All training within MNS follows the principles of nonviolent confrontation. It is intended to prepare for direct action campaigns, build a more sustained movement, explore ways we interact, share specific skills, and develop our ability to work effectively within groups. Some of the types of training in Philadelphia are:

The *orientation weekend* (usually the first weekend of the month), an introduction to the lifestyle of the Life Center and the politics of MNS. It is a way of accommodating the many requests for information about the Life Center by providing an opportunity for people to visit. It also includes short informational sessions on macro-analysis, nonviolence, and personal liberation issues.

The *general training program* (GTP), an intensive, two-week series of workshops intended to acquaint participants with the tools for personal growth and skills for social change which are available within MNS and the Life Center. Similar in concept to the long-term training program, the GTP packs workshops into an intensive format. Almost every morning, afternoon and evening of a two-week period participants work at analyzing society from a "macro" perspective, resolving conflict, facilitat-

ing group meetings, interviewing and canvassing, learning how to build a campaign, speaking in the street, assuming strategic positions and roleplaying them, and thinking critically about movement building and confrontation. This program is primarily for people who live outside the Philadelphia area. Though it's usually highly structured to fit everything in, the people involved have ultimate say over the content and collectively determine their agenda.

The *long-term training program*, the most comprehensive forum for budding and committed activists to hone their political skills and increase their organizing effectiveness. The program seeks to provide participants with the knowledge, skills, confidence and sensitivity necessary to become effective change agents. The aim of the training is to broaden each member's analysis of injustice, vision for a new order, and strategy for moving from here to there. So the program is structured to include personal and spiritual growth between co-workers and housemates; background in local organizing and nonviolent theory and action; organizing and technical skills; consciousness-raising in the "isms" (sexism, ageism, racism...); egalitarian democratic process within groups; earning and sharing income; celebrating and affirming our "new society"; and developing an alternative culture.

Long-term training is the program that steadily draws the most people to Philadelphia MNS. Begun in the fall of 1973 during the third year of the Life Center, it is now a source of competent, trained people who supply MNS collectives and campaigns with knowledgeable workers and organizers. Taking in new people means that MNS and the Life Center are constantly re-evaluating themselves in the process of responding to questions and criticism.

"The army believes in training, because you can't win wars through commitment alone."

The Experiment: Is It Working?

Some established Philadelphians see our constant re-evaluation as a drawback rather than a positive part of assimilating new people into the Life Center. Sandra Boston, a committed Life Center resident, thinks too much introspection is dangerous. She claims, "It's somewhat akin to pulling the plant up by its roots to see how it's growing. We're constantly focusing in on ourselves."

Another Life Center person says, "Graduates of the training program tend to stay here in Philly rather than leave. The training program doesn't give people the confidence to leave. They prefer to work within the Life Center, with its support systems, rather than out there. Also, they have few models for leaving. Most people are faced with staying or leaving as individuals." (This is beginning to change. See "An Offshoot.")

Sabra Dow, who has lived in the Life Center for two years and who plans to leave within the next six months, agrees. She says, "The negative aspect of the training program in connection with the Life Center has to do with people not getting out enough. Maybe because success is fairly assured here, we don't go too far and risk failure. Maybe we don't reach out to become as radical as we could."

Some training program members have found the Life Center to be more fertile ground for learning than the training program itself. Sheryl recalls her experience: "I didn't get much from the training program other than—creative—frustration. From the Life Center I got an idea of how people live in extended families, how commune organization works. Seeing child care functioning well was important to me. Living in the Life Center has given me more mobility, more skills. Being here has refined my political outlook because I've had to think constantly about the situation in England. What I've gained is confidence, organizational skills and a working model of community life."

BLACK 49th STREET SPEAKS

TO A WHITE PERSON

*Brave magnolia tree,
you dare to put down your roots,
and spread out your pink tipped hands,
on 49th Street.*

*Do you protest?
or are you protecting the eye,
from what the soul sees
on 49th Street?*

*Sleeping beauty of winter,
you have a white knight of spring,
to free you,
but we waking black beautiies
have no laws
to save us,
our wounds are our weapons,
our scars are the seeds,
of a hot, scorching summer,
we will burn,
49th Street!*

*Dear magnolia tree,
do you protest?
or are you protecting your life,
from the struggles you see,
on 49th Street?*

—Sheryl Crown
Philadelphia, March 21, 1977



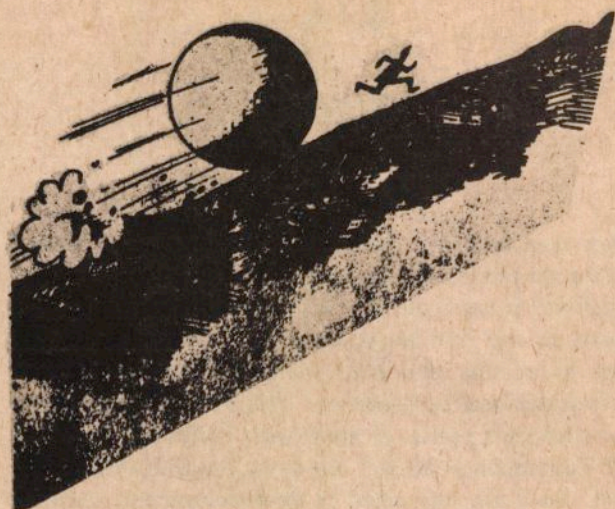
Other transnational visitors point to valuable skills they have acquired in the course of their stay at the Life Center. Linda Nunes from Dar Es Salaam says that when she returns to the African continent she can serve as a counselor to groups and help facilitate demonstrations against multinational corporations operating in Tanzania, and South Africa's policy of apartheid. "MNS politics fit well with Tanzanian politics," she says, "in that they both are leftist. Both are interested in de-development, decentralization, giving people power, and bridging the gap between the rich and the poor." Ilse concurs: "Sweden is a very different society, but I feel I'll take home group facilitation skills and a model for non-hierarchical decision-making."

While the training program is an excellent confidence-builder, trainees need to seek out nitty-gritty political activity to maximize their learning experience. The "nukes" campaign of 1976 which stopped Philadelphia Electric from staging a huge public relations promotion of nuclear energy at its Pennsylvania power plan was an example. Says an organizer, "There was a change from people who had no idea how to organize a direct action campaign to people who could plan negotiations with the power structure, talk with the press, write news releases, plan demonstrations, conduct TV and radio interviews, continue civil disobedience and endure arrest." Sabra speaks of the training program as a help in the campaign. "The training program prepared me with the group process skills in media, recruitment, etc. Going out there and doing things rather than just gaining theoretical knowledge was important. I think a campaign should be part of every training program."

Jim Schrag, long-time MNSer, summarizes the feelings of many people both inside and outside the training program when he states, "The Life Center is a living model of an alternative culture which is more sensible than almost anything you can find in the United States. I think the training program is fairly successful in taking people who are politically naive and moving them to a place where they at least understand the problems in American society, and it provides some of the skills for helping to solve them."

Lynne Shivers, a member of the Training Organizing Collective and a developer of training models since 1968, concludes, "I believe Chavez when he observes that 'The army believes in training, because you can't win wars through commitment alone.' We are in the process of designing training for a nonviolent society." □

A Guide to MNS Region



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al Contacts and Literature



LITERATURE

*from regional contacts or
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Building Social Change Communities. By The Training /Action Affinity Group, Phila. 63 pp. \$2. Add 25 cents postage for one, 50 cents for five.

Clearness—A Process for Supporting Individuals and Groups in Decision-Making. By Peter Woodrow. 30 pp. 75 cents. Add 25 cents postage for one, 35 cents for five.

Dandelion—MNS quarterly newsletter. \$2.50 per year.

"Liberating Sexuality." By Paula Tree. 50 pp. 60 cents. Add 25 cents postage for one, 35 cents for five.

Moving Toward a New Society. By Susanne Gowan, George Lakey, William Moyer and Richard K. Taylor. Four participants in MNS analyze the sickness of today's society and present radical ways of building a new one. 296 pp. \$3.50. Add 25 cents postage for one, 65 cents for five.

New Society Packet. By MNS Outreach Collective. Brief papers on the components of the MNS approach: analysis, vision, struggle, training, community, network structure, alternative institutions. Our basic message! 8 pp. 35 cents. Add 15 cents postage for one, 35 cents for five.

On Organizing Macro-analysis Seminars: A Manual. By Phila. Macro-analysis Collective. 84 pp. \$1. Add 25 cents postage for one, 35 cents for five. *Latest revision of reading list:* 50 cents each (inc. mailing), or 25 cents if included with a manual.

Resource Manual for a Living Revolution [alias The Monster Manual]. By Gini Coover, Ellen Deacon, Chuck Esser, Christopher Moore. Tools for change. Exercises in group process and conflict resolution. Practical information about social change campaigns. How to live in a viable community. Much, much more. Available summer 1977. 350 pp. Approx. \$6.

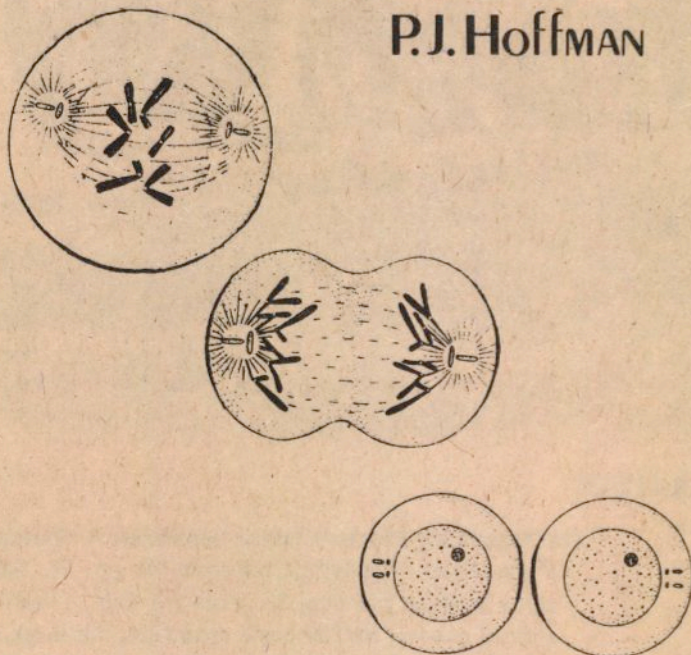
"Sexism Theory Paper." By Rachel Bedard and Celia Castle. 22 pp. 60 cents. Add 25 cents postage for one, 35 cents for five.

Strategy for a Living Revolution. By George Lakey. How to build a revolution, in five stages, while keeping our means consistent with our ends. 234 pp. \$4. Add 35 cents postage for one, 65 cents for five. For ten or more copies, please order from the publisher, W.H. Freeman and Co., 660 Market St., San Francisco, CA 94104.

"Take Heart, All Those in the Struggle." By Cynthia Arvio. The Philadelphia Life Center of MNS in brief. 6 pp. 25 cents. Add 15 cents postage for one to five copies. Reprinted from *Communities*, Issue #19.

MNS SPROUTS IN THE SAVANNAH SANDS

P.J. HoffMAN



"Why Savannah?"...Why Savannah?" Herb Greenblum has been heard mulling this over while slowly shaking his head in bewilderment. Herb is a participant in Savannah's recently formed Movement for a New Society group-in-dialogue (not yet a committed MNS group). And he's not alone in his amazement at how things have been coming together in the past year in this highly conservative, all-American, slow-moving city.

Savannah, Georgia, for those of you who haven't been deposited here by the interruption of I-95, is a beautiful, gracious city of about 140,000. The first city in Georgia and long a major port and cultural center for eastern Georgia, it retains much of the flavor of the Old South. Upon my arrival in October, 1976, I was surprised and delighted with all the old buildings, carefully laid out series of squares and parks, and the trees - including palms and Live Oaks laden with Spanish Moss. Having lived most of my life in New York State and Philadelphia, I found Savannah a fresh, exciting environment. I felt warmly welcomed here; the people, by my Northern standards, were very open and friendly.

However, despite its attractiveness, Savannah is beset with as many problems as any other part of the United States. Pollution from nearby industries, notably the Union Camp paper mill, often permeates the air. The Savannah River is likewise a mess. The public schools are reputed to be the worst in Georgia, which in turn has one of the poorest rated school systems in the nation. Nearby military bases make the city oriented toward militarism. Racism, poverty (alongside extreme wealth), and other societal ills are in evidence. The social movements of the past century - labor, black, peace, ecology, counter-culture, women's, gay, etc. - have mostly bypassed Savannah, at least in their more radical forms.

Why then, Savannah? Why, after years of vital people moving away because nothing was happening, are they beginning to stream back - artists, spiritual folks, counter-culturalists, and even political organizers? There can be no simple answer, but one explanation I've heard is that Savannah has recently emerged as a major spiritual and cosmic energy center (a concept this writer scarcely comprehends). Another way of viewing it is that the South, and especially Georgia, is economically, politically, and culturally rising in relation to most other parts of the country.

For Savannah, the emergence of a Movement-for-a-New-Society-oriented community is a significant development. There has been so little social change activity here that if our group of thirteen adults and four children succeeds in forming a long-term community, that will have quite an impact in itself. Presently, Savannahians are largely unaware of what's happening directly below their noses. But sooner or later, because of our unorthodox life style and the social change projects we expect to undertake, we'll be noticed and perhaps become quite a media event.

Movement for a New Society was first introduced here in May, 1976, by several MNS trainers leading a "simple Living Workshop". That weekend brought together a diverse group of Savannahians, many of whom were barely acquainted with each other. In the process of the workshop, they got turned on to who they were, and to the possibilities for change in Savannah, and a number of them became interested in relating to MNS. Calling itself "the collective" (now The Bulgar Community), the participants in the Simple Living Workshop decided to continue as a group and recruit others who might be interested in starting something.

The Bulgar Community's first meetings were spent discussing the problem of Savannah. They asked themselves, "What would we like to see in Savannah that doesn't now exist?" and came up with five workgroups, one to organize a natural foods restaurant, one a community newspaper (to help offset the influence of the local right-wing dailies), one a radio station, one an alternative school, and one to look into communal living! Each of these new institutions was felt to be necessary to get away from the McDonald's and Republican atmosphere of the city. Energy from the Bulgar Community was put into the food coop, to turn it from a food-buying club into a store-front operation.

The small groups worked hard all summer. By October, when I arrived on the scene from Philadelphia MNS, most of the projects had fallen through. Only the co-op's transition and a communal household, Maupas Mansion, had come about. The Bulgar Community, then involving about thirty people, was at a loss as to what it was about and what it should do next. In November it decided to continue as a "support community" rather than as any kind of action group. But it would encourage small groups to coalesce within it for more directly political activities. Thus, those of us wanting a tight and explicitly MNS collective began getting our act together as an autonomous group within the Bulgar Community.

Establishing an MNS entity is, in my mind, a very ambitious undertaking. Because of MNS's multi-dimensional nature (incorporating nonviolent direct action, community organizing, building counter-institutions, intentional community, personal growth, training and political education, etc.), much more organization is needed than it would take to start a local chapter of some organization or other. Our experience in the MNS network indicates that two or three years is not an inordinate amount of time for an MNS community to form and mature until it's sure of itself. Since we here in Savannah have just begun the whole process, the best I can do is describe where we're starting from and then make a few guesses about where we're going.

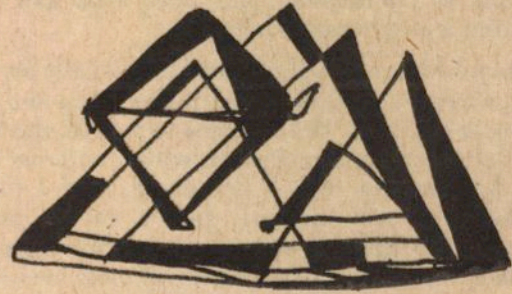
The primary resources we have to work with, the raw materials, are ourselves. I'll randomly select a few enticing individuals from the grab bag:

IAN ROBERTSON came to Savannah two years ago from England to visit friends. The visit has grown to be a long one, as he's become greatly involved in the city. Ian is very energetically a "Community Gardener". A year or two ago he decided that the many vacant lots around the city could be used for producing food, and then set out to organize gardens, working primarily with black people. Through his own efforts, his work became a paid job as the city began funding the gardens. Ian amazes me by seeming to have his hands in everything and to know everyone in Savannah.

SADVIPRA, a.k.a. Sam Sutker, aged 32 years, was born and raised in Savannah. By his own account, until a few years ago, his life was confused and in a turmoil. He and his brothers were the original Savannah hippies before he set off and spent a couple years as a shrimper off the Florida Keys. Without knowing exactly what he was doing, about three years ago he took a meditation class from Ananda Marga - someone had suggested it might calm him down. Since then, he has grown spiritually and emotionally to where many of us hold him in special respect. His commitment to Ananda Marga continues to grow. It was through his developing spirituality that he began looking at the world in political terms. For the money and the value of doing it, Sadvipra is a drug counselor in a methadone treatment center.

PAM THOMAS came to Savannah from Atlanta in January, 1977, partly because of the existence of the MNS group-in-dialogue. In Atlanta, her main passion

and political involvement had been the feminist movement, organizing bookstores and women's self-help medical care. Her primary political concern is incorporating feminist analysis into the social change movement. Separatism has at times been very important to her. Another major focus for her energy is Nate, her four-year-old son. Pam's thoughts and feelings are always up front, making her exciting and easy to deal with directly.



MARNIE MULLER, like Sadvipra, is a native of Savannah. She works with the Savannah Science Museum on ecology projects and has great knowledge of environmental issues. One of the many interesting things she's done with her life is spend a year in India with an intentional community there. She is very concerned that MNS or any other "outside" organization take into full account the special nature of Savannah and not run roughshod over the cultural attributes of the place.

MARK REEVE, 31, is a newcomer to Savannah, drawn here primarily through MNS. In Cincinnati, where he lived for five years, he was active in Peacemakers as well as MNS. He's lived in several different communes and been active in the anti-war movement, and he is a war tax resister. As a writer, he hopes the slower pace of Savannah will afford more time for his writing. Mark has many ideas of how Savannah MNS can move ahead.

And as for myself, I've been involved in the nonviolent social change movement for half my life. I moved to Philadelphia immediately following high school to immerse myself in the efforts of radical Quakers. It was that group which did most of the conceiving and initiating of MNS in 1971. I am a musician, playing as well as composing, and often have a hard time balancing my art with the social change organizing I feel the need to do.

I've described only a few of the people here. Obviously we have a wide range of backgrounds, skills, and emphases. But there is a great commonality, and we find our interests directly linking. With the exception of the four children, our group is somewhat older than might be expected - most are around thirty. I'm the youngest at 26, and one is forty-three and a retired Navy person!

Now, what are we planning to do with ourselves? Soon after we began meeting as an MNS group-in-dialogue, we determined that the best way forward was for us to undertake a Macro-Analysis Seminar. (A Macro-Analysis Seminar is a process developed by MNS for small groups to study the "big picture" of economic and political forces at work in our global society. In addition to straightforward analysis, the seminar includes sections on visions of a new society and strategies for how to achieve such basic change.) We thought the "Macro" would help us get politically smarter and get a good amount of thinking under our collective belt. After the seminar, we'd be better able to contemplate our next steps and begin formulating a long-range strategy.

Besides the Macro, we also meet occasionally for MNS business, when we work out issues in the group and in the MNS network at large. We continue to publish the Wine, the newsletter for communications within national MNS. We are forming our second household, and I for one hope the two will operate pretty much as one community. We expect to embark on our first organizing project late this spring ('77), which will most likely be on a local issue. Meanwhile, a small group is putting together a work collective for home repair (there's lots of restoration of old buildings going on in Savannah). Also, two of our members are the co-managers of the food co-op, and many of the rest of our group are on the board of directors or otherwise quite involved.

WE CAN MAKE THE CHANGES

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We can make the changes if we want.

We can make the changes if we try.

Everything we want to see

We can make reality,

We can make the changes, and we will.

CH: *We will, we will, we will—*

Take heart, all those in the struggle.

Our lives are where it begins.

So celebrate through the hard times,

'Cause we will win.

We can make the difference if we want.

We can make the difference if we try.

Our numbers may be very small,

We can grow and become all.

We can make the difference, and we will. [CH]

We can make the new world if we want.

We can make the new world if we try.

All we do is make it show

And the old world's got to go.

We can make the new world, and we will. [CH]

...the problems and mistakes of the group-in-dialogue have been sometimes unfairly characterized as *problems with MNS.*

Worth mentioning is that Savannah MNS provides the only link I'm aware of between MNS and Ananda Marga. Two of us, Abhik Kumarii and Sadvipra, are core members of the local Ananda Marga aggregate. The link makes sense: both bodies stress the connection between the personal and the political. MNS has historically been open to spirituality; Ananda Marga has been involved in overtly political activities - particularly in India, where their leader has been a political prisoner. But there is other interest in spirituality in our group. Three of us attend the tiny Friends Meeting. One other has been mainly involved with Buddhism. And there are others still who feel no connection with matters spiritual; at least one is very skeptical of any kind of religion, especially Christianity.

The politics of Savannah MNS are undeveloped and subdued. The "raging controversies" within the national network haven't hit home here yet. But that may be for the best - for now, such a tense, challenging, and perhaps exotic form of radicalism is probably inappropriate and ineffective. Almost all the basic work remains to be done here in starting a social change movement, and much of what has been produced in other parts of the country may have to wait. Meanwhile, Savannah is likely to make its own unique contributions.

All is not slow and easy and happy, however. We're experiencing many difficulties (hooray for the learning process!). "Commitment to MNS" varies within the group. Both from inside and outside the group, the problems and mistakes of the group-in-dialogue have been sometimes unfairly characterized as "problems with MNS". Some feel that the group has been too exclusive (this feeling started when the first meeting was called by two people who notified only those they felt would want to connect with MNS, rather than making a generally publicized invitation). We've suffered from personality clashes, political differences, varying expectations, motives and needs, etc.. I assume many of you reading this can relate personally to these kinds of group problems.

Thus, we have a long way to go. There is much confidence that we are strong and will continue to grow together. For myself, what I need in order to best relate to the slow progress of social change is a balance of vision, know-how, and especially patience. Perhaps, in my analysis, Savannah MNS needs more of the vision and skills. In the meantime, Savannah remains a very beautiful city. There are some momentous stirrings. And, strictly MNS or not, good things are bound to continue happening.

PLOWSHARE COMMUNITY

Radicals in the North Country

by Nancy Okerlund

From a page in the 1976 Minnesota Homefires Calendar:

Minnesota has a long tradition of political radicalism. Immigrant settlers, particularly those from Northern and Eastern Europe, came to America to escape political and religious repression; they and their descendants--farmers, industrial workers, miners, small businessmen, teachers, writers, and others--were in the vanguard of the progressive movements of the Midwest, including the People's Party of the 1890's, Women's Suffrage, the Non-Partisan League, Anti-Draft rallies in World War I, the Farmer-Labor Party, the Teamster Strike of 1934, the Progressive Party of the post-World War II period, and the anti-Vietnam War Movement of the 1960's and the early 1970's...

Political radicalism continues to be very much of a reality in Minnesota. The south side of Minneapolis, where most of Plowshare Community lives, has a rather large concentration of it. The degree of such energy in Minneapolis/St. Paul is high. Decentralized, community-controlled projects in housing, child care, health care, and economic development; tax resistance; the co-op network; workplace organizing; gay, women's, men's networks; Native American organizing; radical therapy; political study groups; Third World projects; movement printing; and political theatre are part of the diversity of radical activity in the Twin Cities.

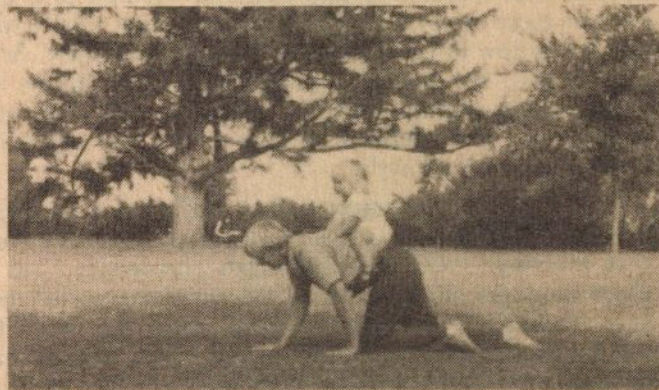
THE PLOWSHARE COMMUNITY

Plowshare is a two and a half year old community of four houses and two apartments which has been part of the MNS network for about two years. All of the households but one, which is in St. Paul, are located in south Minneapolis. Two of the houses are communal, one cares for foster children, and the other is a nuclear family. Plowshare was created from the merging of an anti-war street theatre group and a Stop-the-B-1-Bomber group: it was born out of a commitment to nonviolent social change and a desire to share more fully in each others' lives by settling as a geographic community. South Minneapolis became our neighborhood mainly because of its history in local organizing: tenants' union, Native Americans, senior citizens, blacks, block clubs, day care, co-ops, etc.

In the MNS network, Plowshare is unique. Fifteen children and eighteen adults, most of them couples,

create a constantly active environment. Our commitment to children has a great deal of influence on our relationship to social change and the MNS network. We continually struggle to balance the needs of children and adults.

Local community organizing is a priority, perhaps partly a reflection of the predominance of young families. Our success in regaining control of our local co-op from a small factionist group through the use of a clear strategy, culminating in two nonviolent direct actions [see p.], drew a great deal of attention and



established our credibility as organizers within our local community. The co-ops are not our only focus; in fact our social change work is quite diverse. At the present some of us make a living doing it, others do it outside of paid jobs (mostly part-time). Some social change work is collectively structured; some isn't. Focuses include empowering deaf and blind people, organizing day care, and a seminar on children's issues.

Plowshare was born in the fall of 1974. Our first nine months focused on a self-run seminar on radical economics (called a macro-analysis seminar), which gave us a foundation in group process. Our initial expectation was that the macro seminar would help us select a focus and give us a working structure as a community. After the macro, Plowshare periodically went through times of stress, trying to define itself. However, the stressful periods and our lack of definition haven't immobilized us. Individuals and groups continue to participate in social change work with direct action focused thus far mainly on Farmworker issues and the co-op struggle.

Over the past year Plowshare has clearly relaxed as a community. We don't all have to be in the same place, doing the same things, and we don't always have to be up-front activists. This change has enabled us to support each other more freely. We're more independent of one another, yet when help is needed, the support is there. We continue to get together regularly in a variety of ways: parties, workdays, women's and men's support groups, picnics, singing, collectives, clearness meetings, movies, and soon we hope, political theory study groups. Our work days are special times when we all gather at one of our houses and spend the day getting as many house tasks done as possible. In the evening we celebrate.

The prospect of a life center in the Twin Cities [see box] is very exciting and a little scary to Plowshare. The new energy and diversity of skilled people will add much to our movement-building. Plowshare and others feel strongly that a political community working within the area can help create a strong, supportive network for radical change. The potential of such a network is evidenced by the large number of groups already loosely connected within various submovements.

MARRIAGE IN PLOWSHARE

Many of us are concerned about what will happen to Plowshare Community as a life center forms. The expectation that everyone must be included in each of our activities will lessen, and personal friendships could become more important. The infusion of new people will also bring new forms of relationships to Plowshare. As a community, we haven't experienced many forms of relationships: multiple, women loving women, and men loving men. The potential of new dimensions will be a challenge to our growth.

A fear within Plowshare is that MNS has a growing tendency to be unsupportive of marriage. Most of us feel that marriage, with an egalitarian perspective, has a place amongst other forms of relationships within the *new society*. Our struggle with marriage and its relationship to personal growth and social change has much to offer MNS. And the experience of other kinds of relationships would create a rich environment from which to build our movement.

Striving to live by new ideals takes many forms. We try to share responsibility for house maintenance tasks equally among women and men. We work at resolving conflicts among both children and adults in affirming,



nonviolent ways. We eat a vegetable and grain-centered diet. As households, we give mutual aid and support in times of need. We try to build cooperation and break down competition by sharing resources, such as living quarters, and by participating in alternatives such as the co-op system. We work at developing skills in consensus decision-making, collective work and nonviolent action. And we try to create environments which encourage in our children (and ourselves) a sense of self-worth, caring for others, and a realization that we do have the power to make our own history.

THE CO-OP STRUGGLE

Our most recent experience with nonviolent action was a year-long campaign in 1975-76 to return Powderhorn Food Co-op in Minneapolis to community control, a struggle which was part of a larger political struggle within the North Country co-ops. Powderhorn had come under the control of a small political faction which was not only violating principles of democracy and community control but had also put the co-op into a financial crisis.

After several months, the focus of the conflict became the election process for a new structure for the store. When negotiations over the election guidelines brought no commitment to fair election from the political faction, we began a boycott of the store. We elected a parallel government (board of directors), and carried out two direct interventions.

One was a *shop-in*, in which a small group of people brought a cash register into the store and began shopping, paying the alternative board of directors' cashier rather than the regular storekeeper. A larger group of vigilers outside the store then came in a few at a time to shop.

The action had a number of positive results. We depleted the opponents' resources by \$500, money we were able to use as much-needed capital when the store was returned to community control. The attention drawn by the *shop-in* enlarged our active supporters; it generated energy for our next direct action, the actual regaining of the store. The political faction's energy was somewhat diverted from several other coops it had been harassing. The larger cooperative community's energy was given a boost at a low point in the struggle. And we demonstrated the potential of nonviolent action. During the second action two weeks later, we occupied and regained the store.

This was my first experience in a carefully-built campaign. The strategy involved a process of fact-finding, analysis, public education, exhausting of normal channels (e.g., regularly attending coop council and general meetings, proposing a new structure, etc.) negotiation, training, and finally direct action. One of the important lessons I learned is that such a campaign need not begin with large numbers of people. As conditions deteriorated in the coop, and as we began doing public education, our working group and our community supporters very gradually increased. In the end we had an active working force of 15-25 people, who met sometimes several times a week, and supporters numbering close to 100 who turned out for large meetings and actions.

Nonviolent action is beginning to be valued as a powerful social change tool. But its potential for creating a truly cooperative society can only be tapped by a broad-based movement powerful enough to force basic change. Such a revolutionary movement would work to redistribute power permanently among the people, rather than to seize and hold it in the name of the people. It depends on decentralized decision-making, shared leadership, nonviolent forms of conflict resolution, self-confidence, and extensive participation within the society. A small vanguard of professional revolutionaries cannot solve the problem of oppressed people - only the people themselves can do it. In the words of Dave Dellinger,

Unless the people have exercised their own powers of self-reliance and human solidarity before and during the revolution, they are not apt to be in a position [spiritually or materially] to exercise them after it. And then where are they? Representative communism is as debilitating as representative democracy. We had better aim not at seizing power, but at eroding, undermining, dissolving, democratizing, decentralizing and distributing it. [More Power Than We Know, p. 316].



Several months ago the Plowshare Network Organizing Collective formed to help create a strong local MNS network. We outlined a rough vision and strategy for building such a network.

In brief, we hope to assist the development of a network of local groups, affiliated through Movement for a New Society, balanced in the areas of political action, training and movement maintenance, and alternative culture. Such a network among local groups sharing a high common denominator of analysis, vision and strategy could:

- provide a strong voice for libertarian, socialist-feminist strategy in local social change coalitions
- provide valuable training for local and regional people
- undertake a variety of political action projects including direct action
- be a living/support community for activists, rooting ourselves in lives and values that promote social change

-- provide some regional maintenance services for the network

We see the emergence of a populist movement as essential to social reconstruction. It must be powerful enough to redistribute power and wealth and achieve new social goals. While there is a fairly strong radical community in the Twin Cities, we see a local MNS network as being able to enlarge the number of organizers involved, to provide greater communication and effectiveness among various projects, and to articulate clearly a radical vision. We feel confident of the value of such a network. It fills many needs expressed by local people. It is an organizational form which emphasizes personal as well as social change, democracy as well as coordination, and direct action, training, local organizing, and intentional community. It can build on present constructive efforts in the Twin Cities. Further, the strategy shared among MNS groups provides a compelling alternative to reliance on electoral politics or vanguard parties.

While our strategy is planned so we do not need to rely on outside help, we're open to a few new people who already have skills in training, direct action and personal growth.

(The interpretations in this article are mine and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other members of Pleiades. This article is subjective; what struck me as most important, I recorded. If it had been written by another woman in Pleiades, it would have been different. All the names except my own have been changed.)

PLEIADES: A LESBIAN

BY Judy Lashof

PART I: How the House Came to Be

Two weeks after I discovered myself to be a lesbian, I came to Philadelphia to join the MNS two-year training program. I knew of no lesbians in Philadelphia; there was no MNS literature, collective, support group or house which related to lesbians, and very little which related to feminism. When, three months later, I helped form Sunflower, a new MNS house, I timidly informed my potential housemates of my homosexuality so that if they wished to kick me out they could do so before I moved in.

But they didn't, and I had a place to live. In February, 1975, a gentle, loving gay man moved in. A strong bond based on the exchange of desperately needed support and understanding grew rapidly between us and remains today. During most of that first year, with this one exception, I had to seek support outside of MNS for my lesbianism and my feminism. I frequented the lesbian coffee house, joined a socialist-feminist study group, attended a lesbian class at the Free Women's School (most people knew it as a *women's group*) and memorized the location of a lesbian house in my neighborhood.

Changes began. In April I organized the founding meeting of the Philadelphia MNS Feminist Collective. In May, MNS nationally adopted a statement of support for gay liberation; and in November, several people in Philadelphia MNS began a gay and bisexual support group. Many of us were terrified at our first meeting, but we drew great strength from being together. As the five women began to know each other, we grew braver and more confident; we no longer needed the protection in numbers and the legitimacy of meeting with the men. We met weekly as a gay women's support group all winter and spring.

At our meeting on May 16, 1976, Pam, Pat and I, all young politically active women from the MNS long-term training program in social change skills, had an exciting discussion of separatism as a strategy for revolution against patriarchy, and as a strategy for the women's movement, as it applied to MNS and to ourselves.

One option our notes recorded was

...we should be separatists within MNS, e.g., hold women's network meetings and celebrations at all levels, form women's houses and collectives. We should work on getting MNS to accept feminism and a fair degree of separatism. We should go ahead and assume that what we are doing is part of MNS. We should have discussions with men at our initiative, under our control, from a position of independence.

Though this discussion was remarkable and daring for us for us at the time (we all lived in predominantly straight communal houses), we felt compelled to consider actions which would follow our words. Since Pam was leaving town in three weeks to spend the summer as a camp counselor, we agreed to meet in three days to consider the possibility of forming a women's house.

Could We Find Suitable Women?

We agreed that we were looking for women who would consider a two-year commitment and wanted a strong feminist community. The list of potential house members included some unlikely possibilities: Sharon, Pat's lover, who had never lived communally or taken part in counter-culture lifestyles; and Sandy, Pam's lover, a writer and a member of the Feminist Collective, who had been planning to move to Vermont with an MNS group to start a new mixed community there. Of the other possibilities, two women, Polly, a long-time MNS feminist who is not gay, and Ellen, a woman new to MNS, who was just emerging as a lesbian, expressed interest in living with us.

Inside of a month we had a possible community of eight women, seven of whom defined themselves as lesbians. Pat, Pam, Ellen and Sandy, all strong feminists, had come to this self-definition only that year. Only Sharon's lesbianism pre-dated the lesbian-feminist movement with which she was only now starting to be involved. It would be hard for Polly to get the support she needed from an all-lesbian house, and it would be hard for us to relax and explore our lesbian identities with a straight woman in the house. So Polly withdrew from the group.

Exciting Plans

During June and July we met regularly, to share lesbian support, to get to know each other better, to discuss possible houses, and to set house policy on such subjects as food and men (we decided to let them into the house only by special invitation). We enthusiastically

FEMINIST HOUSE

adopted *Pleiades*, the name of the star constellation of the Seven Sisters, as our house name. Our summer meetings built up exceedingly high expectations among us.

When Pam, Pat and I had agreed to start a house together, I had been scared. Both of them were far more assertive than I. Where it would take me three days to know what I needed in a particular situation, Pat would know her needs and state them in three seconds. Because Pat and I had already lived together in Sunflower for a year and a half, and because the three of us were the core of the gay women's support group, I had shared this fear and we had discussed it. Pam and Pat both promised to encourage me to speak up and state my needs. For me, moving into the house meant living with this support group, which seemed so vital and strong; living with two women, Sandy and Sharon, with whom I had started to build close friendships; and living with two other women I was eager to know. A friend asked me if I, a single woman, wasn't worried about living with couples. I said, no. I hadn't thought of Pat and Sharon, Pam and Sandy as couples, so eager was I to have Sharon and Sandy move in, so close did I feel to each individual.

During our summer meetings our group seemed perfect, unbelievable. We met every couple of weeks to share intimate details of our lives--as in a CR group--details we hadn't shared with the folks we were living with at the time. We reached out to get to know each other. We planned activities together as individuals and as a group.

PART II: What Happened?

Moving In

We found an excellent three-story twin house in fair proximity to other MNS and women's houses. The landlord agreed to strip the old wallpaper, prepare the entire house for painting, and paint the common areas of the house.

In September we arrived back from our summer vacations and each began to paint her own room. Or rather, Pat and Sharon lived in Pat's room while painting Sharon's room; Pam and Sandy lived in Sandy's room while painting Pam's room; Jane's lover came and helped Jane paint her room; and Ellen and I each painted our own rooms, exchanging occasional help.

Contrary to my expectations, I felt alone all fall. We each rushed around and did not connect with each other

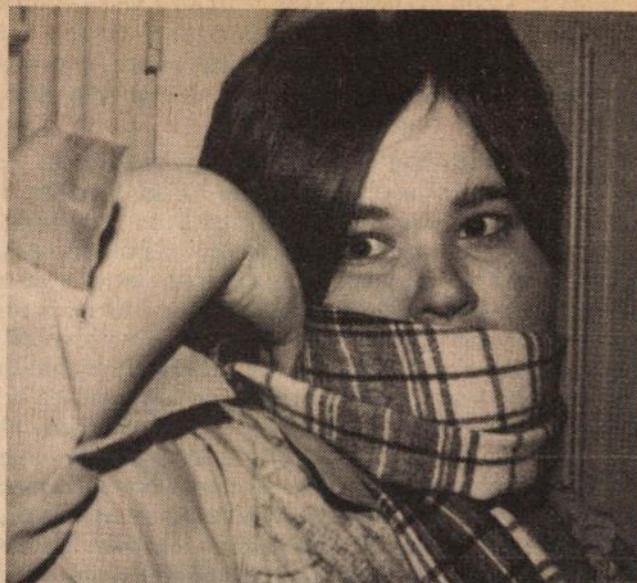
as much as I had expected. The woman I was counting on for the most support was not in a place to give it to me. Dinners were often tense, and when we were depressed, we brought each other down. We didn't discuss how we felt about the house.

First, our needs had changed during the summer, yet our expectations of each other were based on what we had expressed in June and July. I had been counting on Pam for support in standing up for my ideas and facing conflict in the house, but during her summer as a camp counselor she had realized that she needed to relax and become more easy-going, rather than deal with conflict situations. Jane had wanted to live collectively so that she would not be isolated; but during the summer she had begun a primary relationship with another woman. She found that she wanted more privacy and was no longer so interested in getting to know six new women. Because Sandy and Pam had been separated all summer, they wanted to spend a lot of intimate time together. Prior to the summer Pat had been committed to the concept of multiple relationships, but in traveling with Sharon she had developed an exceedingly intense and primary relationship with her. As most of us had been out of town during the month of August, we had not met as a group; our group identity had diminished and these changes in our needs had not been communicated.

Second, although we didn't talk about it, I believe we were all quite scared. Only Jane had lived with lesbians before, and she was a stranger to MNS group process* and the assumptions the other six of us brought to communal living. Sharon had never lived communally and was scared of the lifestyle change involved. And I was scared to be leaving Sunflower, a stable, supportive community, for an unknown house with women more assertive than I. For Sandy, Ellen, Pam, and to a lesser degree Pat, the move to Pleiades was the move by which they broke with their heterosexual pasts and asserted their lesbian identities. And the women in couples faced the prospect of adjusting to living together for the first time.

Third, the expectations of many of us were unrealistic. I believed that Pleiades would supply me with complete happiness and tremendous personal growth. At one time or another most of us expressed similar sentiments. If anyone had ever questioned us on these beliefs, I'm sure we would have said that they were absurd, yet at an emotional level we operated from them. In fact, during my summer travels I proclaimed to many different friends, *In September I'm moving into a lesbian house with six dynamite dykes. I don't know what it is going to be like, but it's going to be fantastic.*

...once the rooms are painted, once people settle in, once we readjust to a new year of activities, once we get to know each other better.



There was a great variety in our attitudes toward criticism and other feedback. A few were outspoken about giving criticism, others held back. One woman seemed to take all feedback as criticism and was easily upset by it. Others were eager for feedback but afraid to ask for it.

As a response to the general scariness of the situation, the unreasonable expectations of each other and the differences in style, those who could do so withdrew to safe, established relationships with their lovers (Ellen and I did not have lovers to turn to, so we reluctantly turned to one another.) This reinforced the process of pair bonding and isolation set in motion in the fall. And the disappointment and dissatisfaction we all felt with the house, but did not discuss, continued the process. I felt that we were all in a nightmare from which we would soon wake up.

* Because living in political community is an essential element of MNS, the six of us with MNS experience had learned communal living skills such as conducting weekly housemeetings which combine business agendas and personal sharing, problem-solving techniques, and communication skills.

In addition, because we all knew each other and we were all women, we had assumed and demanded an openness which was premature. Therefore we didn't have the excitement, which is usually of great benefit to new houses, of gradually revealing ourselves to each other, of sharing the little secrets in our lives, of beginning to ask for and give support, of exposing the ways we wanted to grow and change. We jumped the gun. Some of us tried to turn to the group for everything, expecting it to be a lesbian fairy godmother. Others reacted by withdrawing, clamming up about themselves, asking little of the group, and resisting personal conversations.

Fourth, we were operating on the basis of different and **unacknowledged commitments** to the duration of the house. When deciding to form the house, Pam, Pat and I agreed to a two-year commitment because we envisioned a tight network of support and challenging for

which the safety and trust developed by long friendships was necessary. Sharon also favored a two-year term, as the move was an enormous physical and emotional undertaking for her. Sandy, Ellen, and Jane were reluctant to make so large a commitment. In fact, upon moving in, Jane never connected closely with the others and spent a lot of time at her lover's apartment. Six weeks after she moved in, she decided to leave. (Julie, here from England for a year's training and work, and Mary, another MNS woman, took her place.) Sandy saw style (personality) differences between herself and three of the women and knew that she didn't want a long-term commitment.

Fifth, these style or personality differences, although we were somewhat aware of them ahead of time, proved to be hard to handle. For example, Pat gave a great deal of thought to the productivity of every activity or conversation she undertook and went about her life in a very organized and purposeful way, whereas others relaxed more and did much of their thinking in impromptu sessions. Sharon's *positive*, strong way of stating her opinion was in contrast to Sandy and Pam's more accommodating style. Ellen, who bubbled over with energy and ideas, often let her schedule get the best of her, leaving *little things* like dishes and house jobs undone. Sandy, Pam, Mary and I, while we desired a relaxed, easy-going atmosphere, were irritated by Ellen's style. Sharon and Pat, on the other hand, were assertive about their needs, liked everything carefully worked out and did not like loose ends. Sharon stated her opinions in a sure, strong way, while others preferred an accommodating style which was more conducive to relaxed discussion.

Some of us tried to turn to the group for everything, expecting it to be a lesbian fairy godmother.

PART III: Dealing With Our Problems

Our initial reaction to our unmet needs and unfulfilled hopes was to turn inwards and deny that our fine dreams for a community had collapsed. For weeks I said, *Things will improve once the rooms are painted, once people settle in, once we readjust to a new year of activities, once we get to know each other better.*

We first attempted to address our problems in November when the entire house spent a weekend at a farm outside Philadelphia. (Jane, as I have mentioned, moved out in October, and Julie and Mary moved in in November without being fully informed of the difficulties the house faced.) Aware that all was not going well, we spent two hours looking at ways women are stereotyped and conditioned to act societally. We had hoped this exercise would illuminate our difficulties with each other, but it didn't. I now think that if we had only been able to be honest with ourselves about our hopes and disappointments in the house and our current feelings, and if we had been able to communicate these to each other without sinking ourselves further into depression, we would have made considerable progress.

But none of us was able to think clearly enough about the situation to suggest and guide us along this course of action. No do I know if we all could have mustered the courage necessary for such an undertaking.

The next major attempt to address our problems was a conflict resolution session in December spurred by Pam's desire to feel better about the house before departing on a three-month trip home to New Zealand and before Pat left for a six-week trip home to England. Knowing that the task was difficult, we asked a woman from another MNS house who is skilled in conflict resolution techniques to facilitate our meeting. She helped us to list concrete problems and conflicts in the house and then to consider possible solutions. This technique is excellent for a group that has let itself become divided and unhappy by disagreements over specific details and concrete issues, but skilled as we were in MNS-type group process, we had already resolved most of our conflicts of this type. For us, this session succeeded only in establishing that our problems ran deeper, that they involved dissatisfaction with elements of each others' *personalities* or ways of acting and that we wanted more from each other.

Estimation/Self-estimation

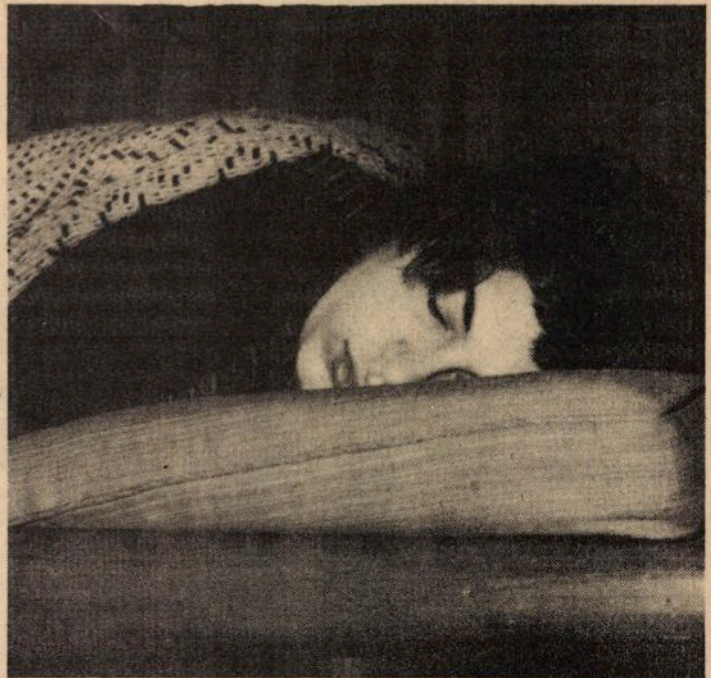
This recognition led us to agree to meet two days later to communicate ways we wanted ourselves and each other to change. Dividing the time equally, we focused on each person sequentially. First one woman stated how she felt she contributed to the house and how she wanted to change the ways she related to other house members. Then the other house members shared with her how they thought she contributed and how they would like to see her change. Finally, we were able to communicate some of our basic concerns. For the most part each woman was aware of the areas in which she needed to work. This process relieved tensions considerably. We all felt that positive change was now possible.



Loosening and Changing

Immediately following these two sessions, Pat and Pam left on their trips. Because of this and other holiday travel, there wasn't time for follow-up, such as checking in with each woman on her goals for change. However, with Pat and Pam gone there were no longer any couples functioning within the house, so interactions became more varied and we had more fun as a group. As all of us had different dietary habits and restrictions, dinner had never been a relaxed connecting time. We finally agreed to abolish communal meals and discovered that as a result people connected with each other much more at other times of the day. Finally, Mary, Sandy and I realized we had been letting others set dominant tones in the house and resolved to be more assertive by stating our needs and by creating and preserving our own positive energies.

It was late January before we had all returned to Pleiades. At our first house meeting of the new year we discussed the future and, as each person revealed her plans, the mood of the meeting got lighter and lighter. Each of us was relieved to find that she was not the only one who was thinking of changing her plans, by moving elsewhere or just not promising to stay at Pleiades. This was our most public acknowledgement that the hopes some of us had harbored for a tightly knit, intimate community of two years' duration were not being met and that we had lowered our expectations of each other. Following the meeting we relaxed, and our sense of humor returned. The next week we discussed our commitments to Pleiades more explicitly and agreed that we would continue the house until June first, possibly not beyond. In April Pat and Sharon moved into their own apartment and two other women moved into Pleiades. This change created new energy and enthusiasm within the house. Ellen, the two new women and I planned to continue the house at least until September.



PART IV: Pleiades -- A Great Women's House!

If my expectations for Pleiades had not been so high, I think I would have been quite pleased with the house. I am close with several of the women and friendly with all of them, though some tensions remain. I think we would all agree that, for us as lesbians, Pleiades has provided valuable space and support. In spite of the difficulties and tensions it has been a good place to live.

Emotional Support for Lesbianism

Pleiades is a secure base from which we can assert our lesbian identities. After a tough day in the patriarchal heterosexist world, it is great to come home to our living room, put one of our many women's records on the stereo, pick up a lesbian publication and collapse in the big easy chair across from the poster **In Celebration of Amazons**. We can count on each other's sense of humor when confronted by prejudice in the outside world. For example, we all laughed as Ellen related a question asked her in a panel discussion: *Why don't lesbians like straight men? I mean, how are you different now from when you were a woman?*

Why don't lesbians like straight men? I mean, how are you different now from when you were a woman?

As lesbians we share a great deal with each other. Little compares with the release and camaraderie of sharing coming-out stories, which we did at one of our early house meetings. We are able to have political conversations with each other without having to waste energy defending our lesbianism and feminism. We've enjoyed singing together, both our own and others' songs. Women's songs contribute to our strength and our sense of identity.

It's been nice not having to defend or hide our bodies from men. We can go about nude in our own house without fear; some of us painted and work in our rooms in the nude.



Connections with the Lesbian Community

Before moving into Pleiades, we had few connections in the lesbian community. As a lesbian house we began to receive notices of parties, dances, demonstrations and other events and to go to them together. Sandy says that, living at Pleiades, she got to know more Philadelphia women in three months than she had in the three years before. I no longer felt schizophrenic about being a lesbian involved in MNS. Pleiades was a house of MNS-connected women helping each other move into the feminist and lesbian communities.

MNS and the Women's Movement

Our largest political contribution has been to introduce MNS and the women's community to each other. One dream we realized was a monthly women's potluck supper and evening program. Our first was a housewarming party, which drew, like most West Philly dyke parties, an enormous crowd, and established our existence in the lesbian community. Our potlucks created a space for women's culture, with creativity sharing, singing, and dancing. These potlucks drew a wide range of women, gay and straight. Where else could my former landlady, an 80-year-old artist who had insisted I entertain my male guests in the parlor, be introduced to some of the most militant lesbian activists in the city?

To celebrate International Women's Day we led a group of primarily MNS women singing women's songs through the streets of West Philadelphia to five non-MNS women's houses in our neighborhood. As individuals we participated in many different women's organizations, bringing with us our MNS group process skills. Two lesbians from Vermont, traveling and raising money for a lesbian mother/child custody case, heard of us from the Women's Switchboard and stayed with us. I was able to give them names of MNS women throughout the Northeast whom they could contact on their travels.

In addition to introducing MNS women to the women's community, we've helped to make feminism and lesbianism more prominent in Philly MNS. Lesbians and other feminists interested in MNS, passing through or considering moving to Philadelphia, knew that we would be there. In early fall we had a potluck for gay and bisexual women in MNS, which attracted more than a dozen women, some of whom have since come out and have joined us at some lesbian events.

Our very existence has made feminism more of a core reality for Philadelphia MNS. Now MNS people are afraid **not** to take feminist thinking into account! We've rattled the bones of some MNS men, shaken up their thinking. And we've defeated the paternalistic fears of some that we would need their help; we've taken care of ourselves just fine!

Despite some early disappointments, Pleiades has been a positive force in the lives of the women who lived there for the past year and in the lives of Philadelphia women's and MNS communities. □

THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

Rachel Bedard

But how is the personal political? How and when did politics step out of that high, cloudy realm and become MY business? And how, once I'd become a politico, did that new thinking turn me back toward my own personal life and struggle?

How much of my strength as a radical do I owe to the experience of growing up Catholic, poor and "different" in Vermont?

I was raised a French Catholic in a small Vermont town in the 50's. From this conservative, family-oriented situation, I have moved through a brief marriage into community, feminism, and political radicalism. In appearances, I am very far removed from my parents and their values. Yet in ways I feel closer to them now than in those intervening years when I married and became upwardly mobile. I'm sure, now, that the experience of growing up a poor French Catholic helped me not to take the traditional path following "the American dream."

I believed in Good and Evil and that the Pope was the head of the world.

In that little northern town, my society was very limited, as were my life options. Because I was smart academically and therefore an "exceptional" girl, I had before me the choice of becoming "more" than a mother: I could be a teaching nun or a combination of teacher and mother, that was all.

I believed in Good and Evil and that the Pope was the head of the world. We Catholics were the true believers, the true followers of Jesus Christ, the "one true Jew." I was one of the "deserving poor" who looked forward to happiness in heaven and in the meantime gave money to the truly unfortunate—those masses of



hungry and half-clothed natives around the world whom missionary sisters and brothers were actively trying to save with food, clothing and education in the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Catholics worked together to fight Evil (the Devil) in the world. We did this by praying, by supporting missions, and by being good citizens. We learned that the government was somehow the result of God's will and should be obeyed. Our government was working against others for world power. These others were pagan or atheist. (It was years before I came to understand that the Pope is relatively powerless compared with the Rockefellers and the more hidden ruling class elite.)

My models as a girl were of women who swore their lives to "poverty, chastity, and obedience" as nuns, and women who were sworn as wives to the service of their husbands. With millions of other Catholics I would some day give my money each Sunday, money that my husband had earned or "extra" money that I had made teaching, to help the cause of the Church. I was part of a world-wide force for good, a force greater than any other.

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My family relied for its economic survival on my father's work-week of about 55 hours at a drug store, our precious vegetable garden, and my mother's skill at tailoring clothes and remaking old ones. Hard work was an ethic in our household. We never had much money.

We children went to Catholic grade schools, where the girls wore navy blue jumpers and knee socks and white blouses. Little money had to be spent on clothes. I remember envying my brothers because their shirts and pants came from *stores*, albeit chiefly the "thrif" stores.

The family politics were my father's politics. My mother had much more liberal tendencies, while Dad was a strict conservative, but my mother kept her opinions to herself. When we complained that Dad made all the decisions, she told us that because he worked downtown, he was with people more and so knew more about the world than she did. Also, he was the "provider" for the family and "had a right to have his say."

This rocklike security of the family, with the father as head, and of us Catholics as God's chosen people, formed the basis of my young life. This was the right way; "wrong" was anything different from what we were. We often heard that our lot as Catholics was harder than most, *because* God had chosen us specially.

Just as Mary submitted to the Father and brought Jesus into the world, so women were to submit to their husbands and "bear fruit."

Disrespect was a sin. Unkind thoughts were sins. Anything that stretched the boundaries and asked questions ("Why do Catholics have to marry Catholics?" "Why does Daddy make all the decisions?") was almost certain to be disrespectful or unkind, and a sin. For a child, there were only two courses: to submit or to rebel. All of us children did some of each, my parents holding firm, convinced that in time we would see the error of our ways and, through their thoughts and prayers, return to the state of grace.

The Catholic Church was compared to the original Holy Family: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. In the Church family were the Holy Trinity (God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) as head and father; the Church (Pope, cardinals, archbishops, etc.) as the bride of Christ; and all their children, the followers of the Catholic religion. To leave this family or to be excommunicated was to be condemned to the eternal fires of hell.

The image of the family was constantly evoked. A nun was the bride of Christ, the students her children. The most holy union was the union of a Catholic man and a Catholic woman in Holy Matrimony, and the children that issued from that union were gifts of God. Just as Mary submitted to the Father and brought Jesus into the world, so women were to submit to their husbands and "bear fruit." A woman's first and primary role in the world was that of a mother.

To my surprise, at seven or eight, I fell in love with a woman I saw at Mass one Sunday...

To my surprise, at seven or eight, I fell in love with a woman I saw at Mass one Sunday, a woman with broad shoulders and a navy blue dress trimmed to a slender waistline. I never learned her name, but I've never forgotten how she swung those beautiful shoulders down the aisle, going to take Communion, or how her dark hair fell forward as she bowed her head reverently, coming back. For weeks I tried to catch a glimpse of her again at the same hour of Mass, but she must have been just passing through town. I fantasized about her for months.



Meanwhile, I felt sorry for my mother. She was a housewife, raising us all and getting pregnant quite frequently, twelve times in all, though she lost six in stillbirths and miscarriages. As a result, she was always susceptible to illness.

A marvelously talented person, Mom had, in those days, few channels to express her creativity. She would make our clothes with painstaking care and an artist's eye to color and design. Many of her talents were lost beneath bundles of laundry, tense, late dinners, unpaid bills and little films of dust that drove her to distraction. My father would abuse her for not paying bills soon enough, and sometimes for paying too many bills too soon, but she put up with it because he brought home the money.

She rarely got away from home. Walking the mile and a half into town was an occasional and special treat, because it gave her time to think by herself. At fifty-one she got her driver's license. My father remarked recently, not finding her at home when he got there, "She was a much better mother before she learned how to drive."

My father remarked recently, "She was a much better mother before she learned how to drive."

Years of watching Mom devalue her intelligence whenever Dad was in the room, especially when it appeared they disagreed, brought out my rebellion. I was determined never to subject myself to a man. This gut feeling stood in contradiction to the Catholic Church's myth of Mary and the teaching that all women were to be, like her, chaste, pure and modest, handmaidens of the Lord, subject to our husbands, the fathers of our children, just as we all were subject to God the Father.

High school brought my first awareness that the Catholic doctrine did not fit reality. There I met people who were not Catholic, and I could not see or feel the differences between them and me. I could not see how they were lesser than I, as I had been taught; some were surely more religious. Some were poorer than I—did that make them more blessed? Many, many, obviously had more.

The ones with monied families seemed to have the power—such as it was—in the school. They were the cheerleaders, the heads of student government. For survival, I had to integrate myself not only into a non-Catholic culture but also into a higher class structure than my own. Catholic specialness hardly seemed



like a gift of God when others were getting promoted, scholastically and socially, not because of their efforts, but because of their (fathers') names. I recalled one of the few stories my father told of his childhood: how one year, when he sat stargazing on the roof of his family's home, he could see Ku Klux Klan crosses burning on the hill on the other side of the valley, lit to try to scare the French Canadians back up into Quebec. (That story has always stayed with me; I think of it whenever I am reminded that people with French names are still the laborers, not the owners and leaders, in our town today.)

We Catholic kids came into the mixed high school as to an alien culture. I remember an Earth Science class early in my freshman year when I stood up to answer a teacher. In Catholic school I had been taught that this was a natural sign of respect, but as I stood up, I became aware of people snickering. Even the teacher had a smile on his face. I found I was "wrong" in my Catholic behavior; what was expected in my old school was laughable here. This somehow associated in my head with the laughter that a French Canadian named Pacquin came in for when he ran for a town or county office. He was the laughingstock of everyone, my father included, for his "French" way of "talking with his hands," and his otherwise eccentric "French" behavior.

Conditioned pride in my identity made me walk with dignity in well-worn clothes, when I would much rather have worn the fashionable "matched heather."

But the values of my childhood stood by me. Since I had always gone to school in a uniform, a small variety of homemade clothes seemed like plenty. Conditioned pride in my identity made me walk with dignity in well-worn clothes, when I would much rather have worn the fashionable "matched heather." My religious training that I was one of the fortunate few allowed me to be generous with whatever I had and supported me against the impulse—and the mainstream cultural indoctrination—toward consumerism. I "made do"—and was really quite happy—in spite of not having the store clothes or the \$5 a week allowance of some of my friends.

In grade school I'd had a very strong training in the lives of saints and martyrs; I'd heard hundreds of times that it was good to die for one's faith. This (and a generous dose of inborn obstinacy) made me strong in my convictions, and the strength showed. In high school, I sought the best in every situation. I was kind and generous, even to friends who snubbed me when I wore the "wrong" clothes. I worked hard and was respectful toward my teachers. Though I steered clear of competition, my talents were gradually recognized, and I was encouraged to apply for college scholarships.

SONG TO VERMONT

*I remain in the green mountain hills.
My heart is buried beneath the white birch
Near to the highway, where the old home stood.
Look for it there when I've gone.*

*Find it, spraying up in Indian paintbrushes
Coloring little girls' cheeks for war;
Smell it, sweet as an apple
Luring deer to the edge of the road;
Hear it in the wood thrushes' low warble,
In the jay-scream's "Thief!"*

*Now I taste the apricot spring air.
In the hills I remain, I remain
In the green green hills.*

—Rachel Bedard

My attraction to women was still unacknowledged. When girlfriends took long walks with me but wanted only to discuss their boyfriends and to say in the end, "What a good listener you are, Rachel!" my disappointment surfaced and confused me.

In the last years of high school, I had a final (good) experience with Catholicism. A program called The Search for Christian Maturity arranged for groups of students to spend weekends learning how to be leaders, to talk in groups, and to develop a community spirit. It was a totally new experience for me to be in an atmosphere of encouragement and appreciation instead of competition, and I gained a new kind of confidence.

College was a more intense challenge. I had won a scholarship to one of the Seven Sister colleges, where the security of my small-town Vermont life proved no advantage. My roommate, slightly higher in class background than I, pointed up the difference at every possible moment. I had come for a liberal arts education; she had come at least as much for shopping trips to Fifth Avenue and to begin to gather some of the glamour that her older sister had acquired. She headed for Yale mixers and gold necklaces; as soon as possible, I headed for the blue jeans and work shirts that were becoming the fashion among the daughters of corporation lawyers and college presidents. This costume suited my income *and* liberated me from the image of myself as a sex object.

Now I readily questioned Catholic doctrine, but my working-class Catholic values were ingrained in me. When I began to fathom the *New York Times'* version of world power, it was with the question that had been raised constantly for us in sermons: If this is the state of

things, what can YOU, through your hard work, do about it? We had been taught to examine ourselves, not other people, for evil. In the face of conspicuous wealth, I lived a consciously simple life. In the face of the Vietnam war, I marched and rallied. Out of frustration with the powerlessness of people under capitalism, I studied nonviolent action and searched for a loving and active community. This I found in a Quaker meeting in Vermont the summer after my sophomore year. Its non-hierarchical structure and politically responsible members impressed me, and that fall I officially left the Catholic Church.

The marriage was marked by my negative feelings about betrayal of the people I belonged with and the effort to assimilate myself into an upper-class way of life.

Meanwhile, my feminism blossomed at this historically female institution. A "women's liberation" meeting, at the start of my freshman year, clicked with me totally. My first contact with lesbians both frightened me and made comprehensible some physical sensations I had already had. I continued to read avidly and talk with friends about sexism, women and patriarchy (though we didn't call it that at that time). By the time I reached my junior year, I was fighting hard to be the heterosexual I "should" be, and nothing else. In spite of my real feelings, I was still convinced that my options were marriage and teaching and that I owed it to my family to fulfill them. Lesbianism would be a grave sin and could not be considered. I married at the end of that year.

My husband was from the same Vermont town as I; I had known him since high school. He offered me excitement. His was the first truly liberal family I had met, and they talked often about politics. I valued the new vistas of our relationship: for example, the scandalous notion that he, as a Protestant, could be as good as I; and that I, as a woman, could be as powerful as he; and that we both could work together for world peace.

Beyond idealism, I couldn't help but be impressed by the fact that Steve's family owned hundreds of acres of land and that, when I met him, none of them had to work. Far from disapproving, I was awed, and I ever felt a bit sorry for them because a good part of their money came from various settlements after the death of Steve's father. They were more conscientious than I could imagine wealthy people being. I was impressed with their (upper-middle-class but sincere) soul-searching about how they could responsibly use the Vermont land which Steve's dad, a New Yorker, had bought when land was cheap.

The power of that land loomed large to me. My own family had lived all my life on a one-quarter acre lot embedded in a hillside; we had a 20-year mortgage. Now, without raising a finger, I—with Steve—could own outright a small house on his family's land with a fertile plot of ground adjoining it for a garden. It was a given that Steve would have it, just as his older brother had inherited the one-room schoolhouse on the other side of the road.

My parents had wanted me to get as far as I could and had encouraged me to do that through education. But, from them and others, I had also been indoctrinated with the notion that a woman is an extension of "her man" and becomes a part of his family. So, to me as to them, my marriage was a move up in the world and gave me a new social standing.

"What does Steve want to do?" they would ask me. Or, "Aren't you being hard on Steve?"

Class differences then became very personal. Steve's parents' attitudes toward mine (by this time his mother had remarried) often seemed patronizing. The marriage was marked by my negative feelings about betrayal of the people I belonged with and the effort to assimilate myself into an upper-class way of life. From the first, I found myself battling Steve for a sense of power in the relationship. Less than a year after our marriage, we were in the process of splitting up. ("What does Steve want to do?" they would ask me. Or, "Aren't you being hard on Steve?") Steve himself, in some ways untraditional, was at times possessive and dominating.

The first separation lasted only a summer, but it marked the beginning of the end. When I rejoined Steve in the fall, I gave only minimal assurance that I was returning to the marriage. Within a month I began to separate our finances, which meant that for the first time I was living off my own earnings. I made other friends and involved myself in programs where I could gain support from many other people. We continued to live together, as friends, until we had detached ourselves from each other and made new friends. Though there is still hurt between us, it is not the dreadful pain of feeling totally alone and unloved.

The Life Center of West Philadelphia, where Steve was living when I rejoined him, was a supportive place to end our marriage. It affirmed each of us as individuals through some trying times. Here Steve was much less emotionally dependent on me than he had been. Here I began to be seen as my own person. I was freed from the sense that Steve was my "enlightener," my key to political awareness and action. Here I got encouragement to draw out my own thinking and express it to

Oddly, my complete honesty with my parents has brought me closer to them than years of toeing the line and trying to appear happily married.



others. I started seeing my personal experience in political terms, making connections between my feelings of powerlessness as an individual and the set-up of our economic and educational system. Because this community believes in countering society's myths, I got the support I needed to begin to express the "unspeakable" feelings—of love for women and hatred for the patriarchal system—that were hidden inside me.

I moved closer and closer to my own real concerns. First, as part of a communications collective, I learned to write, edit and design a quarterly newsletter. Then I helped start a feminist collective and wrote a theory paper on sexism and patriarchy. Eventually, I joined a support group on gayness and bisexuality, which rapidly became separate lesbian and gay men's groups. At last I was able to take the step of coming out to my parents as a lesbian and separating from my husband.

Looking back, I can see that each step I took toward my present position was taken without much confidence in myself and sometimes against unconscious inner warnings that I was leading myself to hell. Nevertheless, through the strength of my convictions, with will power and the help of my friends, I changed, because I had to in order to live with myself.

In the Movement for a New Society, I am currently concentrating on the issue of class bias and am working against the norm of middle-class values within the organization. This to me is as crucial as stopping sexism, because until structures are created that give people real

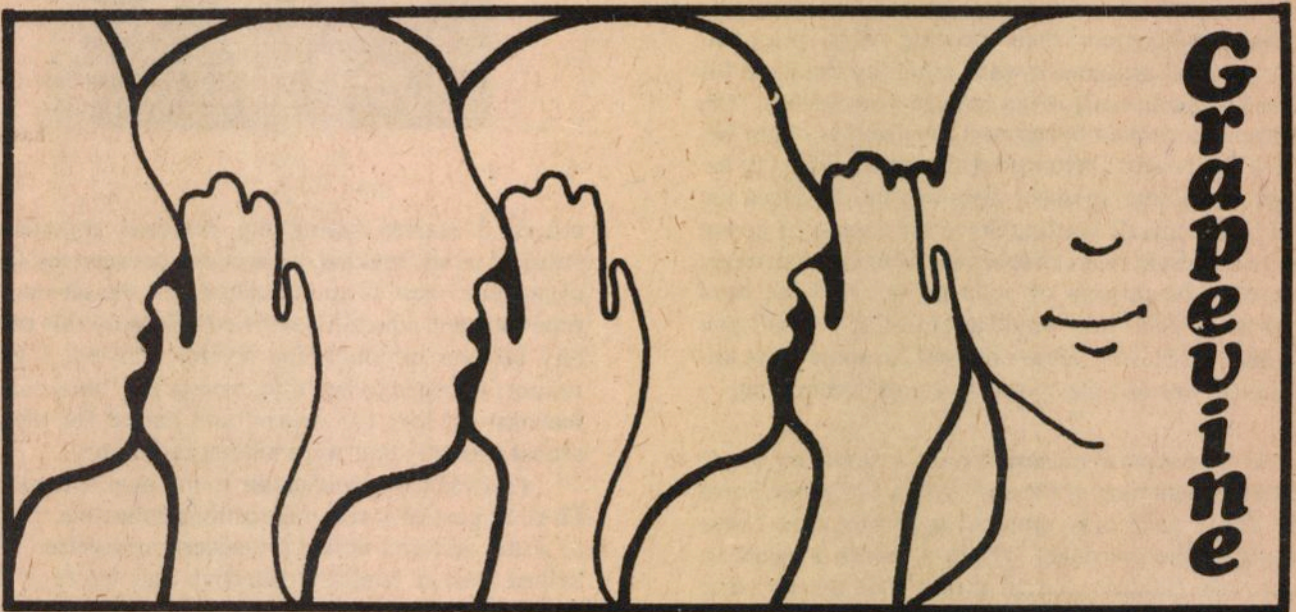
economic choices, we won't attract women who are totally dependent on wages—theirs or a man's—to survive. Until we can understand why people *don't* have economic choices, working-class people will continue to be viewed as stupid and wasteful and mercenary, and women in families as unenlightened or weak or lazy. In this situation we won't have solidarity. And a divided group of people cannot take power from the well-coordinated hands of their rulers.

Oddly, my complete honesty with my parents has brought me closer to them than years of toeing the line and trying to appear happily married. They had never accepted my leaving the Church and still don't understand why I can't work for my ideals in the world as a Catholic. Because we were married by a justice of the peace, not by a Catholic priest, they never fully accepted my marriage to Steve. They didn't accept my politics because they didn't trust the rest of what I was doing.

Today they are appalled that I keep wanting to "use that ugly word" (lesbian); and yet as a lesbian I'm more open with them than I've ever been, and they're listening. I can support my mother in her independent political thinking and be sympathetic to the fact that she still needs and loves my father. I can support my father in his distrust of centralized government and at the same time let him know that I object to some of the ways he treats my mother. I can say that the position of women in the Catholic Church, and of women in the family, and of my family in relation to Steve's, are all part of a system of money and thought and power that I am opposed to and that I am working to change. I have taken my personal situation ("not being fair to Steve") and said, "I act this way for a reason."

They and I will be struggling with the reason for many years, but now they are listening to me, and I am identifying once again with them and with my roots.

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☆ A Woman's Place, Athol, NY 12810 [518] 623-9541.

A Woman's Place is closed - temporarily, we hope. It has taken a great deal of thought, energy and pain for us to acknowledge that it is impossible for AWP to continue as it is. Many of the plans and hopes we conveyed in our newsletter were inadequate in the face of money and energy shortages, and limited community support. Fundraising has never been done

adequately, because of the workload involved in running the retreat and maintaining the property. Each woman who has lived here has contributed an enormous amount of energy to keep AWP going. a large amount of money has also gone into AWP - \$24,850 in land payments and \$100,000 in operating expenses. AWP is not in its present crisis because anyone has failed. We believe that the continued existence of AWP can no longer be the full responsibility of the women who live here. It must be the responsibility of a larger group - a community of women outside of AWP who acknowledge the political and personal importance of AWP.

AWP has operated with only four women and barely enough money to meet minimum expenses for most of the past year. (Present collective members are Sage, Creek, Kendra and Rust - Bonnie has recently left.) For example, we have not been able to pay last year's taxes and penalties if \$3750 or make such necessary improvements as a new septic system. From our experience, we estimate that ten women are needed - two of who would do full-time fundraising.

A new group, forming this summer, will reopen AWP as a retreat with fees on a sliding scale. A schedule will be drawn up

so that at least two women will be here to share information with the new group until August 15. This means it will be necessary for other women who are familiar with the operation of the retreat to volunteer their time.

If the plan to reopen is unfeasible or consensus cannot be reached at the June 15th meeting, a general meeting will be called. This meeting will be open to women who express an interest in the future of AWP or in using this space for another women's project. These women must be prepared to take the responsibility for implementing decisions made at this meeting. The four of us will participate in the meeting on the same basis as any other woman.

In either case, on June 15 an interim board will be set up to determine how finances will be administered and the current collective will be dissolved. No individual will be able to control the finances during this transition. In the event AWP folds, any money left over after the bills are paid would remain in the AWP Inc. account to be used by an interested group of women as seed money for a similar project.

The decision to continue AWP is no longer up to us. If you believe AWP is important and would like to help, you can: 1) send money; 2) contact us about becoming a caretaker; 3) come to AWP to help do the necessary work to prepare for the summer; 4) contact women who might have money to contribute; 5) help spread this information as quickly as possible; 6) xerox and post this notice wherever women gather; 7) organize a benefit; 8) send feedback.

AWP will be open for Memorial Day weekend regardless of what happens this summer. We hope that as many women will come. We also hope that this won't be AWP's last weekend.

☆ Address Correction: Communities #25 gave a jumbled address in a community description. The correct address is:

Integrity, box 9, 100 Mile House, BC, Canada V0K2E0

☆ Now is the time for all good men and women to come to the aid of their Washington Area Men's Awareness Network. The Network needs your help if it is to continue creating the space where men can grow and change. All of us in our different ways have enjoyed the benefit of this space for change. Unfortunately the job of creating this space has usually depended on the work of one or two people. We are now too large to continue in that fashion. We must reorganize.

A brief discussion of the history, function and activities of the WAMAN is presented as a prelude to reorganization: We began in the Fall of '74 as Men's Liberation of Washington, DC. This beginning was a sharing of a special space

by a men's consciousness group formed in the Spring by Warren Farrell. Our current name was adopted in the Summer of '75 to better reflect what we are.

The WAMAN's main function has been setting up support and consciousness groups for men. Sometimes we have started a group every month, then sometimes several months go by before any groups are started. In the 2 1/2 years of our existence over 300 men have been in such groups. In the past 4 months, three groups have been formed. Each of us knows what happened in our own men's group. Yet little is known about the ongoing nature of such groups. The Network needs a group of former and present men's group participants to give serious thought to the process of forming groups, guidelines, topics and the length of time groups may want to meet.

The **Listening Man**, our newsletter, has been nearly an art form under the editorship of first Richard Shell and then Ken Hodges. They may have put a great deal of effort into creating an idea and an image of men's awareness. This newsletter serves as our conceptual platform; it is us in a world of grown and rigid roles. As our sense of self as men and as members of a men's movement grows, so will the way we do a newsletter. Right now several people are needed to create our next newsletter.

Outreach work for the Network has centered around the film **Men's Lives**. We act as follow-up discussion leaders for the film's coverage of what it is like to grow up male in American society. This gives many people a chance to hear the ideas of men's awareness. At the rate of six to eight presentations a month, this also requires a small group of members. We also set up table at health fairs, criticize the playthings available for boys, hold one day conferences, and even have get-togethers to just enjoy each other's company. We need many more get-togethers for the fun of it.

There are several ways you can help continue the Washington Area Men's Awareness Network. You can give some of your time to making the Network exist: Come to a meeting. You can give a donation to help the Network pay postage and printing costs. Recommendations, ideas & comments welcome. This network can no longer be the task of two or three people; we must all do it. I know I cannot do it myself. Help me to reorganize this one person coordinator role out of existence. *Doug Schocke*



☆ **The New Harbinger**, newsletter of the North American Student Cooperative Organization passed along these strategies and notes in their May '77 issue. (Vol IV, No. 2) NASCO, box 1301, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

The College Housing Program was created in 1950 by the US Congress to make long-term, low-cost financing available to build student housing. It wasn't until 1968 that the Act was amended to permit student cooperative corporations to qualify for financing. And five short years later, then-President Richard Nixon froze all funds for the program.

Those five years, however, saw rapid growth in student coop housing, with 8 different coops obtaining financing. They built everything from dormitory-style accommodations to high-rise apartments, housing thousands of students.

Recently HUD announced that, for the first time since 1973, \$155 million will be allocated to a renewed College Housing Program. Although the regulations aren't entirely clear, student cooperatives should once again be eligible. Hopefully, they can look forward to a renewed period of student coop growth.

The **National Consumer Cooperative Bank Bill**, a bill to create a loan institution for US consumer cooperatives, has been introduced by over 65 co-sponsors in the House and 32 co-sponsors in the Senate. In correspondence to your Senators and Representatives, refer to bills HR 2777 and S1010. Critical now is gaining support of the Carter Administration, which has not yet (as of press time) determined its views on the bill. Letters to President Carter, himself, a patron of several farm coops, are especially needed.

We are happy to report a gratifying response to the **Bank Bill Tear Out** printed in the last issue to help get contributions for the Bank Bill lobbying effort. Those who missed the tear-out and want to contribute should send their check or pledge to Cooperative League of the USA, 1828 L St., NW, Wash DC 20036

Cooperators across Canada are being asked to fund a new effort in cooperative development by joining the innovative **Cooperators' Club**. The Club, new for 1977, will have no directors, no officers, no constitution, and no annual meetings. All it will have is members, hopefully 50,000 by 1978, who simply agree to contribute at least \$10 per year to coop development.

Money will go for cooperative education and research in Canada, and for coop development in third world countries. Money sent overseas will be matched dollar for dollar by the Canadian Government.

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CONFERENCES & WORKSHOPS

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☆ Family Synergy, P.O. Box 30103, Terminal Annex, Los Angeles, CA 90030

Alternative Lifestyle Conference

August 20, Members & non-members meet for a variety of educational and experiential workshops. Write Bill Cerf, at above address, for detailed information

☆ International Vegetarian Union sponsors a **World Vegetarian Congress** in India, Nov 18 - Dec 9. For Details write: Indian Vegetarian Congress *The Grove* No 1 Eldams Rd, Madras 600018 India

☆ **Another Place Farm**, Rt. 123, Greenville, NH 03048 (603) 878-1510 or 9883. Another Place is a conference and networking center. It is non-profit, with costs to participants on a sliding scale, based on economic situations. Gatherings are communal, involving sharing of skills and work.

Summer Conferences

July 30-31 **New Games Tournament, Music & Culture**; August 12-14, **Appropriate Technology**; August 15-Sept 5, **3 Week Healing Arts Community**; August 26-28 **Networking Conference**; September 1-5 **Healing Arts Fair**; September 22-25 **THE 5th NEW ENGLAND COMMUNITY CONFERENCE on the occasion of the Fall Equinox.**

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Groups Looking

☆ **Leavitt Hill Farm** in New Vineyard, Maine, is comprised of 70 acres; 20 acres cultivatable, the rest in medium growth mixed woods. There is a small house, a cabin, a tool shed in excellent condition, and a run-down barn. Adjacent to this is an additional 180 acres of mixed woods that we presently hold the title to, but will lose if we cannot refinance the \$25,000 mortgage on this woodstand.

The entire 250 acres has a predominant southern exposure near the crest of Leavitt Hill. We are in the beginning stages of putting the land into a land trust, and are exploring the CLT model.

Norman and Susan Pearson and daughter Terra (3) bought the land 2 yrs ago. Eric Skalwold moved here recently from a neighboring communal dairy farm. We three adults have rather different aspirations and methods of working. We agree on developing a community and growing as much food as possible, using techniques that are *soft* in their impact on the environment.

We will be planting apple trees, rootstocks, blueberry plants, carrots, soybeans and a large garden shortly. Woods improvement is slow, but is progressing and is a source of income. We aim to grow most of our food and to produce most of our income directly on the farm.

We are seeking people to join this venture and have hopes that with these people, or by virtue of a magic money source we'll be able to keep all 250 acres. In the near future, we think, it may be vitally important that land be available for people to use for their own support.

You can write us: Leavitt Hill Farm, New Vineyard, Maine 04956 (self-addressed stamped envelope, please)

☆ **Ananda Apprentice Program 1977.** Ananda Cooperative Village is again offering its Apprentice Program, an opportunity for serious seekers to participate in the spiritual activities of the community and to work with Ananda members. The 1977 program will run from May through October, and will offer apprenticeships in carpentry, organic gardening, organic dairy farming, publications work, beekeeping, maintenance, foodstore work and vegetarian cooking. For more information and an application form, please write to Prakesh, c/o Ananda, 900 Alleghany Star Route,

Nevada City, CA 95959.

☆ **Earthward Bound.** We're a group of people working for a non-profit foundation in central Kentucky, trying to set up a research and education center in 3 major areas: (1) alternative energy systems (2) crafts (3) organic agriculture and husbandry. We're looking for people with extensive carpentry skills to help construct more buildings for more people to live in. We're trying to find some people that would fit in here. Write Earthward Bound Foundation, Star Rt, box 328, Big Lick Hollow Rd, New Haven, KY 40051.

☆ **Jewel Weed**, a group working towards a self-supporting agricultural life-style, is looking for women of any age, with or without children or lover, to balance out a group of six men (5 gay) and two pregnant women.

We live collectively on one hundred acres of farm and woodland 10 miles from Ithica, New York. We live in simple structures, and share a common kitchen and gathering space. A new, central house is under construction. Call or write. **The Cabin**, box 62, West Danby NY 14896 (607) 564-7271.

☆ A new, small community near Univ. of Conn. in Chapin, Conn. Dwellings surrounded by woods, fields and streams. The two individuals here, so far, are oriented to: Finding inner unity, open relationship, community vision. Talents now present or needed: counseling, encounter, Zen-Yoga (non-doctrinaire) Dance, Music, body, crafts and building, gardening & cooking, other new vocations, group development, networking, area community action, ecological concern, alternative ed, women's potential, special education, writing. While a number of the above activities reach beyond our own circle, we are committed to remaining aware of the communication and flow among ourselves. Visits and stays possible now. Call Dorothy Thompson, Don Leveridge, po box 601 Willimantic, ct 06226 (203) 455-9777.

☆ **The Sunshine School** is a thriving alternative school located out in the country in Nelson County, Virginia. The school currently has 14 preschool kids in a morning program and seven 6-8 years old in an all day program. We want more older kids and would like to encourage **Communities**-type people to move into the area. The school is a coop founded by some county people and some members of Shannon Farm. There are a lot of good people in this area, both in the movement and on the fringes.

The school is non-sexist, non-authoritarian and open classroom. It is not a free school. We have one full-time teacher who is just outstanding with kids, and six parent aids who rotate mornings, two each day. We are living a half-time teacher aide for next year, as we plan on expanding. Older Kid tuition is \$50 per month, plus some moderate labor obligations. Partial scholarships are available. Contact **Sunshine School**, Rt 2 Box 183, Afton, VA 22920

☆ **The Alternative to Alienation Commune** is a group of men and women, living together and working together, to overcome their alienation, to change their character, and become the kind of people who actively practice, in their everyday lives, what Erich Fromm call *The Art of Loving*. At present, we are 17, 8 women and 9 men, ranging in age from 23 to 46. Three of us have been living together communally for more than 5 years; two others have been with us more than 4 years; four others joined us about 2 1/2 years ago; and four others 2 yrs ago. There are, as yet, no children.

Our commune has a psychoanalytic base, in that everyone in the commune is studying psychoanalysis informally. Every one here can analyze dreams, do free associations, and apply the rudimentary principles of psychoanalysis to analysing coself, and in helping others to analyze themselves. To further our self-development, our commune has a very large library, with thousands of good books.

In addition to psychoanalysis, we also work on what Wilhelm Reich called *character armour*, that is to say the tension built up in muscles and tissues. We find that massaging each other, and applying methods borrowed from yoga and chiropractic, can be beneficial. Like Reich, we believe that a satisfactory sex life is essential to good health, both mental and physical. None of us are paired off, which allows us to live in an atmosphere of free sexuality, without the problems of possessiveness and jealousy. We are very warm people and we hug and kiss a great deal. Out motto? Snuggle!

Our economic base comes from businesses which we own and operate together. There are two restaurants in the heart of downtown Toronto (among the top ten

in the city, according to Toronto's main morning newspaper). We also own a baked goods business, selling bread and baked goods to retail stores, and we have a typesetting business with two typesetting machines. None of our communards work outside of our business.

We own a 200 acre farm, but none of us live there, as there is only one small building on the land. Our home is a 15 room house in downtown Toronto, 4 or 5 blocks from our businesses. In addition to our excellent library, we have a good stereo and many, many record albums, from rock to symphonic. Also piano, violins, guitars, banjos, mandolins, flutes, recorders, conga drums, harmonicas... No one has their own room, or even bed, and private property is minimal. We share almost everything, and it appears to work! Of course, that requires mutual respect, where the rights of others are not negated or neglected. Contact us at Box 46, Station M, Toronto, Ontario M6S 4T2.

Waterfarm is my magically beautiful waterfront home on 35 acres of secluded field and woods. I live here in a high state, with many aspirations which will come to pass as more people choose to live and/or visit. Please get in touch if you're interested in high-consciousness people, small-scale farming, horses, fishing, sailing, growth, joy, abundance and lots more. I'm a highly-evolved, creative, open, very young 43, with considerable experience in group living, growth trips, etc., and a solid professional background in law and economics. I'm eager to build with people on a full or part-time, residential or non-residential, short or long-term basis. I'm within reasonable range of Philadelphia, Wilmington, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. I've developed and will soon be offering a series of dynamic growth programs. **Ben Hopkins, Waterfarm, RR 3, Chestertown, MD 21620.**

☆ **Woodburn Hill Farm** is looking for a special person or two who'd like to barter a summer at the farm for doing some special things with young Woodburners. Not a babysitter! Rather someone to take several hours a day responsibility most days to help the summer at the farm be fun and creative. With lots of free time and chances to meet your own leisure and farmer needs. Respond to WHF, Rt 3, box 98, Mechanicsville, MD 20659

☆ We are a group of individuals scattered across the U.S. Eventually we will all get together on land already occupied by an existing community. Although we all have varying degrees of inhibitions, all of us are *bisexual* in that we want to rid ourselves of the inhibitions which prevent us from showing affection toward other members of the human race regardless of sex.

Ultimately, we believe that a positive attitude should prevail in the community so that sexism, role playing, and labeling of this type, do not become issues. We have no actual members, but over 100 interested persons have contacted us over the past year. We are accepting of all ages, backgrounds and ideologies. **Billy Sheers, box 60023, Okla. City, OK 73106.**

People Looking for Groups

☆ **Musical Community?** I am looking to study music intensively, in a community or school setting. Is there a group around that's geared to this? or certain person(s) within a group that are pursuing it? Please contact me. I play piano and guitar, notated and improvisational, and most especially want to develop a capacity for music-healing. Michael Sussman, 805 West Ave. apt 1-a, Austin, TX 78701.

☆ Here are 12 acres of meadow, logged-over woods and stream in the Nehalem Valley of the Coast Range of Oregon. There grows a 2nd year garden and some bamboo. I'm digging a basement workshop now. There is a six sided pole frame house. I'm living in a 27' two story school bus. We've been experimenting with solar heat. Want to see ferro-cement, masonry, experimental energy efficient houses.

A vision of a community of a healing arts retreat center is a dream at this point, a direction toward which I have been working for many years. Giving thanks and growing food, devotion to growth in its many gestures and learning to express oneself in a group are values I hold important. I idealize non-couple life style.

I am David Booth, the only person here now. I make a living tinkering out jewelry and teaching and doing massage. I am on the board of the Portland Saturday Market. The local economy is very specialized. It's either working in the logging industry or growing cows. Neither appeals, so I depend on the weekly city market day economy and my craft. it saves me working in the mill.

The class I teach is called *massage as meditation*. It covers deep massage, anatomy, state boards, bio-energetic exercises and deep relaxation.

We are buying the land. Payments are \$100/month. Northrup Creek meanders thru and the river is near. Their are neighbors but not within sight. It's 65 miles northwest of Portland, 550' elevation. If interested in visiting call or write. What are your skills, expectations, resources and dreams? David Booth, Northrup Cr Rd., Birkenfeld, Ore 97016 (503) 755-2340.

☆ **A Womens' Collective.** Four women and a 6 yr old girl (and a dog and cat) in a big old 7 bedroom house, with shaded yard in Rosemont, Pa, close to transportation.

we've existed for 2 yrs with various changes in people and now are becoming an all woman's house, strongly feminist and mostly gay. We've continued to be all professional people: 3 social workers and an anthropologist. (We've tried for some time to think of a name for our collective, but haven't yet).

We have 2 bedrooms available and would prefer a woman and her daughter to join us. Rent and utilities are about \$100 monthly per person.

Write 1014 Montgomery Ave., Rosemont, PA 19010 or phone (215) 527-2148 evenings. Ask for Kathy, Linda or Debby.

☆ **Sylvia at Woodburn Hill Farm** is interested in forming a Maryland organic gardening organization. Are you? Information, ideas and support welcome. Contact her at WHF, Rt 3, box 98, Mechanicsville, Md 20659.

☆ **Woman (33) and son (7)** seeking established rural or semi-rural community. Prefer individual homesites and work-share system for gardening, large livestock, building and other community projects. Good background in food preparation and management for group interested in (or already having) community bakery or commercial food establishment. Would prefer to stay in Southwest, but will consider any area. Will forward resume and any additional information. Please let's hear from you soon. D.O., box 2169, Mesilla Park, New Mexico 88047.

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☆ **Two people, experienced in communes, groups, the movement(s),** looking for women and men to found a revolutionary community based on caring ways of doing the following: broad and deep consciousness, cooperation, spontaneity of thought and action, openness, direct action and consciousness raising, nonviolence, study and analysis, intimacy, challenge, Feminist understanding and action, all kinds of therapeutic approaches to changing, spiritual consciousness, playfulness and celebration, bi/gay sexuality. What do we mean by these? What would you mean? It would be great to find people who want to live this way in community, and who feel that living this way will help us be creative in effecting long-lasting over-all changes in this society. If you'd like to hear and talk more about your interest in this community, write: Beane/Poly, Rt 2, box 405-P, Hillsborough, NC 27278 (919) 732-4069 (We're open to moving.)

☆ **Traveling Opportunity.** Last year I bicycled for 4 1/2 months across America with a dozen people from all over the world. That was the first time I had ever bicycled long distances and I enjoyed it immensely. So much that I am doing a shorter trip thru New England this fall. It will last a month (Sept 15 - Oct 15) and will travers Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and Mass. The only expenses will be to get yourself to and from New England by whichever means of transportation you choose, and for the food and sundrie items you purchase on the trip. We will camp out at night.

But this will be more than just a bicycle trip thru the splendor of New England in the fall. We'll climb Mt. Katahdin in Maine, spend several days on a communal farm and visit an environmental research center on Cape Cod, to mention a few. You don't need to be a super athlete or have had any previous experience with bicycle camping. If fact, if you do come, we insist you be interested in a wide range of experiences and not simply in proving what a great bicyclist you are. If this kind of low-cost adventuring sounds good to you, please contact me. Bob Niemerow, 1620 S. 37th, Kansas City, KS 66106.

☆ **Wants correspondence:** Jimmy Gaillard, 139-630, po box 787, Lucasville, Ohio 45648

Help Wanted

Whitebird Clinic is a low-cost, multi-faceted, people-oriented clinic. We offer many services in the areas of medical treatment, pregnancy counseling, on-going counseling, crisis intervention, legal referral, advocacy, youth services and drug detoxification. 90% of our staff of over 100 are volunteers. **We are in search of a new doctor.** We would prefer a doctor with preventative, non-traditional and/or holistic orientation, although this is not essential. Although the pay is minimal (\$800 monthly) the position has the advantage of being extremely flexible and open to new ideas. In addition to this position, we may have an opening for a **Counseling Dept. Supervisor**, with crisis intervention experience. Contact: White Bird Sociomedical Aid Station Inc., 341 E. 12th Ave., Eugene OR 97401 (342-8255).

☆ **Auto mechanics wanted.** Black Duck Motors is a community-oriented, worker-controlled, anti-sexist auto repair shop. We have ben open for over 3 yrs, and we primarily serve Seattle's radical, poor and alternative communities. Our prices are low, but the shop is together enough to pay decent wages to experienced mechanics. We are looking for politically conscious, responsible (not necessarily ace) mechanics, women and men to join us. Contact Roger Lippman at **Black Duck Motors**, 710 S. Jackson, Seattle, Wash 98104.

☆ **Sam Ely Community Services Corp.**, a statewide land trust organization is starting a fund raising program to increase financial self-sufficiency. Anyone who takes time, can help us substantially. No cash outlay except postage. Send manufacturers' coupons, used postage stamps, labels and proof of purchase seals, cash refund forms, trading stamps, reusable envelopes, picture postcards. We expect a minimum of \$50-100 a month thru this program. More could provide a staff salary and money for the Land Acquisition Fund.

Write for details: 1831 1/2 Water St., po box 2762, Augusta, ME 04430 or call (207) 622-0020

☆ **Open House Community** is looking for tools. We'd like to set up a workshop to make wooden toys for kids. We've been unsuccessful in finding used power tools. We want a bandsaw, lather, belt sander, drillpress at bargain prices. Anyone know of this type of equipment for sale? Contact O.H.C., Rt 7, box 410, Lake Charles, LA 70601.

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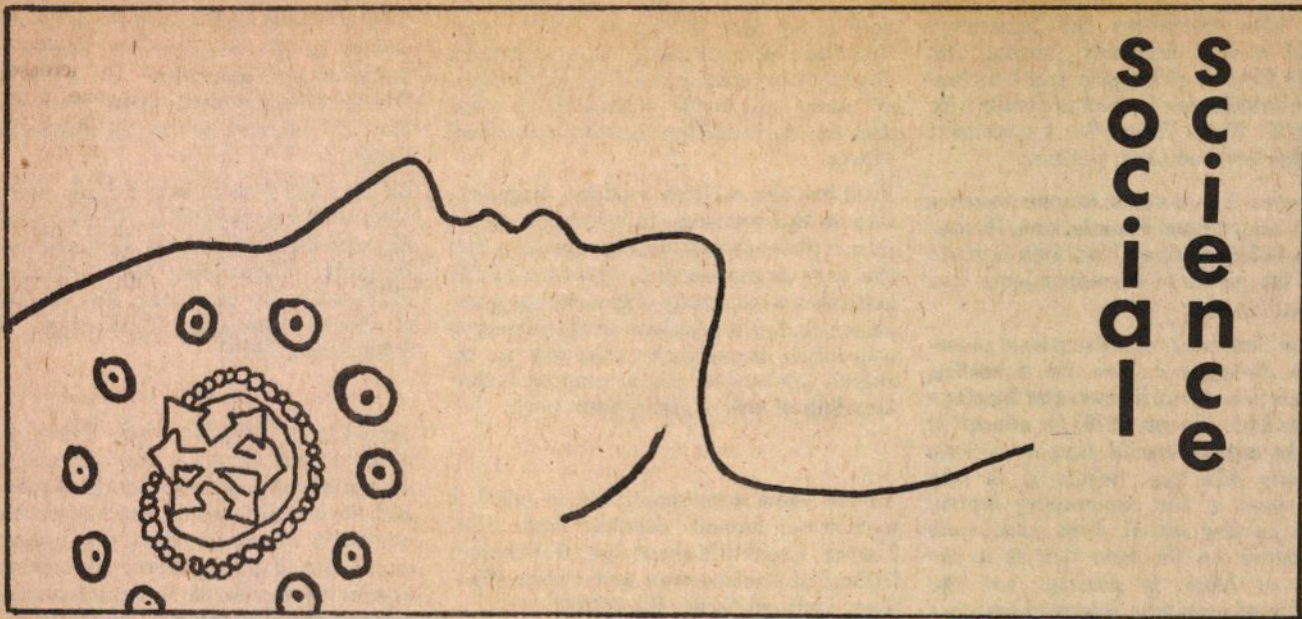
A LATE ENTRY

Summer Events at Ananda Cooperative Village, 900 Alleghany Star Rt., Nevada City CA 95959. Ananda's 3rd annual **INDIA FAIRE**, July 30-31, 1977, 10am-8pm: Games, Indian Bazaar, children's booths and events, drama, Yoga demonstrations, music, Western and Indian foods, classical Indian music and dance, story tellers, prizes for the best costumes. **ADMISSIONS: \$1.00** per person. (If you wish to stay overnight, make reservations well in advance. Group rates available. Campers and tents welcome. Call (916) 265-5877.

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL WEEK with Swami Kriyananda August 28 to Sept 4.

ORGANIC GARDENING SEMINAR, August 12-14. The head of Ananda's gardens will lead the teaching staff. Bring a hat and a notebook.

Registration information: You may register the day of the seminar, or at the start of Spiritual Renewal Week. We cannot guarantee you a cabin or tent for SRW unless you reserve in advance with a deposit. There is no registration for India Faire, but you can reserve a tent or cabin for India Faire Weekend with a \$10 deposit. Organic Gardening, \$35 singles/\$60 marrieds. Spiritual Renewal Week: \$125 per person, \$225 mArried couples, \$40 for one child, \$25 each additional child, \$25 non-refundable deposit for SRW, \$10 additional non-refundable deposit to secure cabin-tent. **Make checks payable to: Yoga Fellowship.** □



Edited by David Ruth

In this column in issue #25 I wrote an article entitled *The New Localism: an ideology for our age? Part 1*. In that article I argued that communal researchers would do well to shift their overall theoretical framework from one built on the utopian literary and historical tradition to one which is constructed around the contemporary movement toward decentralized economic and political democracy. I argued that present-day communal workplaces and communal households can best be understood as particular instances of a larger movement toward the development of collective political and economic structures, and that the experiences and ideas arising out of that movement constituted an emerging ideology which is beginning to be labeled *The New Localism*.

In that article I promised another in which I would expand upon the emerging ideology's *experiential and intellectual roots*. I promised, too, to attempt a clarification of the role of marxist theory in the *new localism*. As I was beginning to hammer out the second article, however, I somewhat serendipitously fell into a correspondence that promises to seriously delay my writing; it promises, also, to help me in my efforts to make sense out of all this thinking and experiencing that we're doing.

What happened was that Wayne Wheeler sent me information on a proposed conference (see the first *Brief* below) and asked if I had any suggestions. In my response I mentioned four of the writers who have been influencing my thoughts about issues related to the new localism, particularly about the govern-

ance processes of the communes, worker-controlled industries, food coops and cooperative health care and day care centers. (See the *Briefs* below on Ramon Sanches, Fred Thayer, John Friedman, and David Gil.)

I sent that letter, and a subsequent one expanding on the relationship between those theorists and events here at Twin Oaks, to about 60 or 70 of the social scientists with whom I've had contact. That correspondence generated most of the information below, plus substantive theoretical comments from John Bennet, David Gil, Ramon Sanchez, and Frank Lindenfeld, as well as relevant articles from Gil, Lindenfeld, Mariampolski and Friedmann (see below for *Briefs* on the articles.)

It'll be some time before I distill an article out of a possibly voluminous exchange of ideas (the substantive correspondence now runs close to 40 pages) but I hope to publish a good deal of the correspondence as a special issue of the *Southeastern Review of Sociology* which I'll be guest-editing (Winter, 1977-78). If any of you would like to enter into this correspondence network I will be able to send you Xeroxes only if a substantial number of you contribute something toward the copying and mailing expenses. (Depending on how big the packets get, they probably will cost us between \$3-5 each to mail out.) Fortunately we'll be able to keep up the present level of correspondence for a while because of generous contributions from 3 people totaling \$40 and because of some money being made available by the *Southeastern Review*.

I'm excited - and somewhat apprehensive - about the idea of trying to direct and organize the correspondence into publishable form. What's moderating the apprehension is the real belief that at least a few of us who are corresponding will both have the desire and ability to sustain the kind of dialogues which are starting.

If the discussions are truly useful, then I'll be writing *Part 2* of the new localism article. Right now, though, I'll use the rest of this column to give you information that has come to me in recent correspondence:

BRIEFS

Wayne Wheeler [Inst. for Icarian Investigations, PO box 31161, Omaha, NB 68131] announces that he and Mark Rousseau (Program Chair, Conference on Utopias and Communes, Univ. of NB, Omaha, NB 68101) are putting together a conference called *Utopias and Communes: Historic and Contemporary Perspectives*. Wayne writes that *The purpose of this conference is to bring together scholars, regardless of academic disciplines, in a variety of formats designed to inform one another and be informed about intellectual perspectives and developments in the field of utopian thought, planning, and intentional communities and the conditions and social movements which accompany their growth.*

The conference is scheduled to happen in Omaha, October 11-14, 1978 (yes, 1978). Write to Mark if you are interested in presenting at the conference or if you have suggestions about work which should be represented.

Wayne also announces the impending birth of a new scholarly journal, the **Analytic Review of Utopias and Utopianism**, the first issue of which is planned for early 1978. Write Wayne for a statement of the Review's editorial policies.

This is what I said about **Ramon Sanchez** [Dept of Educational Foundations, Hunter College, 695 Park Ave., NYC 10021] in the first of the pieces of correspondence I've been sending out:

...*Ramon Sanchez is an educational theorist who develops a plan [in **Schooling American Society: A Democratic Ideology** Syracuse Univ. Press, 1976] for education which, he argues, would support a truly democratic ideology [ideology in the double sense of the explanatory matrix and the guiding ideas]. This philosophy rests heavily on the idea that it is the division of labor in society, not the ownership of property, which guarantees class oppression. The educational structure which complements a democratic ideology must, he maintains, be characterized by the absence of oppressive power relationships; and the education must be aimed at producing people of widely generalizable competence. He concludes by calling for small communities which are also schools, small communities connected together in Kropotkin-like freedom.*

In a letter Ramon adds that *Democracy is not only a political and economic business, it is also sexual. The sexual dimension of equality is the most grating.*

Ramon is now attempting to create a setting in which he can test out some of his ideas; he's proposing that Hunter College support an Urban Survival Institute. The Institute, he hopes, would be able to demonstrate, among other things, *How to restore deteriorated housing stock and vacant lots and put them to productive use under new forms of cooperative community ownership and management, and How to build communities by establishing the material conditions for authentic community control so as to reduce the unstable, transient character of much of our urban population.* An exciting, if not overly ambitious, project.

About Fred Thayer [Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, Univ. of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260] I said:

*Fred Thayer is an organization theorist who, in his book, **An end to hierarchy! An end to Competition!** [NY: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1973] extends the linking-pin model of organizational structure into a consensus model through the introduction of formal and informal iterative decision-making procedures. In this model those acting as link-pins do not represent members of one group to another, but rather they represent themselves as they've been changed in the consensus procedures of*

each group they belong to. Fred argues that this consensus model more accurately describes the decision-making procedures of many successful organizations than does one derived from their organizational charts.

Fred has also written a paper, **Organization as Epistemology** in which he argues from a phenomenological perspective that the very organizational structure of the institutes which study organizations guarantees certain limitations on the variety of conceptual frameworks available to research workers for the attempted understanding of how organizations work.

In the same correspondence in which I mentioned Ramon Sanchez and Fred Thayer, I said this about **John Friedmann** [School of Architecture and Urban Planning, Univ. of Calif., CA 90024]:

*John is a planning theorist who's written a manuscript entitled, **The Good Society: a primer of its practice.** The manuscript is a verbal collage of quotes from Wittgenstein, Buber, Lao Tzu and others mixed in with John's development of a dialectical schema in which social planning and what he calls social practice are in a necessary but contradictory relationship with one another. Liberty, equality and fraternity live only in opposition to, and in the interstices of, social planning. These values live in the unregulated actions of people doing things together in small groups, groups whose fields of action are circumscribed [and made possible] by social planning.*

Since then John has sent me an article in which he develops some of his ideas more systematically, **Innovation, Flexible Response and Social Learning: A problem in the Theory of Meta-Planning.** [Geographical Papers #49, Dept. of Geography, Univ. of Reading, Whiteknights, Reading, England RG6 2AB] The article was written while John was on a Cuggenheim Fellowship at the Centre for Environmental Studies in London last year. A *slimmed down version*, John says, is to be published later this year in a collection put together by George Sternlieb at Rutgers.

David Gil [The Florence Heller Graduate School for Advance Studies in Social Welfare, Brandeis Univ., Waltham, MA 02154] writes that he is increasingly convinced that the development of communal life contexts is the most appropriate approach toward an egalitarian-libertarian transformation of social orders in Northern America and Western Europe. He adds that he is currently working on an application of the kibbutz idea to the workplace context in capitalist industrial enterprises as an economic and political as

well as social and psychological counter-reality to the hierarchical, exploitative management dynamics. He mentioned that he was to present those ideas at the May 1977 annual meeting of the Socialist Party.

Gil lays the foundations for his work in **Unravelling Social Policy: Theory, Analysis and Political Action Towards Social Equality**, [Cambridge, MA: Schenkman, 1973] and in his new book, **The Challenge of Social Equality** [Cambridge, MA Schenkman, 1976].

Jane Ferrar [210 Riverside Drive, NYC 10025] is organizing a session on intentional communities for the annual American Sociological Association (ASA) meeting to be held in Chicago on Sept. 5-9. Papers to be presented are: **Patterns of Accommodation between Closed Religious Subsocieties and the Core Society** by Ruth Shonle Cavan (see below); **Dynamics of Conformity in Communal Groups of the Counterculture Movement** by J. David Hawkins [Center for Social Welfare Research, Univ. of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195]; and **Ideology in Communes** by Angela Aidalá [Dept. of Soc., Columbia, NYC 10027]. Ben Zablocki and I will be the discussants for the session. (Ben's address is the same as Angela's).

Jane will be presenting a paper on parenting in urban communes at the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) annual meeting being held in Chicago on Sept 2-5. (Jane's work is part of Zablocki's large urban commune project). The session, entitled **Where Have All the Changes Gone?** is being organized by Sylvia Clavan [Chair--Family Division--SSSP, Dept. of Soc., St. Joseph's College, City Ave. at 54th St., Philadelphia, PA 19131]. Pat Conover [123 McIver St., Greensboro, NC 27403] will also be presenting a paper on his communal research at that session.

Finally, Jane is writing a review of an article on **Communes as Family Forms** for Marvin Sussman's [Dept. of Medical Social Science and Mental Health, Bowman Grey School of Medicine, Winston-Salem, NC 27103] new journal on **Marriage and Family Reviews**. I'm sorry I don't have bibliographic information on this; I'll let you know more when it's published.

Bennett Berger [Dept. of Soc., Univ. of Calif., La Jolla, CA 92037] another apparent drop-out from the ranks of communal researchers wrote recently that *I was just getting into writing my commune book in 1974 when I innocently agreed to become editor of **Contemporary Sociology**, a task which has unfortunately taken far more of my time than I originally*

ated it would. But now it's back to book with three more years of writing about it under my belt. He says his book is not so much one more graphy of communal living, but r using communal data to illustrate ways in which ideas about technology, raising, sex, religion are changed or ined by the conditions under which e do technology, child-raising, sex, on, etc. I'm looking forward to seeing ook.

y Constantine [22 Bulette Rd., a, MA 01720], besides continuing his ice with Joan Constantine as an "native" family therapist (or an "native family" therapist), is current- suing two rather disparate sounding ests, which he insists are intimately ed. The first is one in strategies and tures for lateralized consensual sys- which he is pursuing both in action in theory. In "action" with two rations, one in NYC and one in ide, Australia, trying to establish open, humanized, consensual work onments--and in "theory" in which he s to have integrated individual and m perspectives from an otherwise onious paradigm. He'll be writing a on this over the next year.

's second preoccupation is with their futures, and the future ects they represent. Larry says that s found himself a fairly lonely voice concern for children's rights rather protectionism that ultimately opes children and arrogates not only rights as people but sometimes their ts' rights as individuals. (See 's article, *Where Are the Kids? ren in Alternative Lifestyles in age and Alternatives: Exploring ate Relationships* [Roger W. Libby lobert N. Whitehurst, (Eds.), *Glen- II: Scott, Foresman, and Co. 1977, 57-263*].

eth Kanter [Dept. of Soc., Brandeis, Waltham, MA 02154] writes that *In ense I'm no longer doing communal rch [at least as an official academic prise], but in many ways I remain a rter, an encourager, a fan. And I am very interested in the extension of unal principles to other institutions courage important social changes.* of course, is not alone in this shift of ests to the larger problems involved lective efforts toward social change. eth's early work does not stand llerged, but it still serves as an tant impetus for the serious study of nt-day communal ventures, and for tablishment of connections between ndeavors and contemporary ones.

Roger Libby [Dept. of Soc., State Univ. of NY at Albany, 1400 Wash. Ave., Albany, NY 12222], whose new book, *Marriage and Alternatives* I mentioned above, is starting a quarterly journal : *Alternatives: Marriage, Family and Changing Lifestyles*. The first issue will be published by Sage in Feb., 1978. In his prospectus Roger says,

This is not another journal on marriage, the family, sex roles, or sexual behavior. Rather it is a journal unique in its assumptions that the foregoing areas must be examined holistically and systematically in order to understand the complexity of intimate behaviors both within and beyond conventional conceptions of marriage and family. There continues to be intense and widespread preoccupation and experimentation with sex and intimacy, open relationships, new forms of community and primary associations, and alternative lifestyles. The journal is intended to fill a void in the scholarly conceptualization and investigation of these phenomena.

The nearly fifty-member editorial board that Roger has assembled does, as he boasts, represent a virtual Who's Who of professionals concentrating on marriage and alternatives. Roger asked me to pass the word to potential contributors--write him for a prospectus.

Hyman Mariampolski [Dept. of Soc., Anthro. & Social Work, 239 Waters Hall, Kansas State Univ., Manhattan, KS 66506] organized a session on "The use of media, artifacts and documents in the sociological study of utopian communities" for the April 1977 meeting of the Midwest Sociological Society. Papers were presented by Bruce Hackett, John H. Morgan, Ruth S. Cavan, Jonathan G. Andleson, Hyman Mariampolski, Dana C. Hughes, and Elmer and Dorothy Schweider. Thus far I've seen only the Mariampolski and Andleson papers. Hyman's paper, especially was useful in its careful deliniation of the problems involved in using personal documents to trace the course of the various experiments in social design tried at any particular community. I'm particularly interested in a current project of Hyman's in which he is trying to trace the pressures which caused the leaders of New Harmony to switch from a system of egalitarian distribution of resources to one based on the "value" of each member's labor. I've often wondered how a researcher in the year 2075 would ever piece together similar experiments at Twin Oaks today. Hyman's careful work gives me some faith in the possibility of drawing useful conclusions from such research efforts.

Donald Pitzer [Center for Communal Studies, Indiana State Univ., Evansville, IN 47712] sent us the following announcement:

The National Historic Communal Societies Association will hold its fourth annual Historic Communal Societies Conference October 20-22, 1977, at Aurora, Oregon, site of the German colony of William Keil from 1856 to 1881. Sessions will be on the communalism of the Keilites, Hutterites, Mormans, Mennonites, Llano del Rio, Allensworth, New Odessa, the Puget Sound Colonies, and other groups of the west. College credit will be available. For information contact Donald Pitzer or the program chair, Allen D. Epp [Dept. of History, Portland Community College, 12000 S.W. 49th Ave., Portland, OR 98219]

Frank Lindenfeld [Dept. of Soc., Cheyney State College, Cheyney, PA 19319] is currently working with Joyce Rothschild-Whitt [Dept. of Soc., Harvard Univ., Cambridge, MA 02138] on an as yet untitled anthology of writings on workplace democracy and social change. The anthology will include among others, articles by Menachem Rosner, Daniel Zwerdling, Gary Newton, George Benello and Andre Gorz. Joyce has an excellent article on problems encountered in running cooperative organizations in the Fall 1976 Working Papers [123 Mt. Auburn St., Cambridge, MA 02138].

Frank will be presenting a paper entitled *Power in Alternative Organizations: The Case of a Free School* at an ASA roundtable session on Sept. 9th in Chicago. That session is being organized by Rue Bucher [Chair, Section on Organizations and Occupations, Soc. Dept., Univ. of Illinois at Chicago Circle, Box 4348, Chicago, IL 60680]. Information about all the sessions can be obtained from ASA, 1722 'N' St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Besides his publishing and teaching, Frank is working on *The West Chester Project*, which he describes as *an effort to establish a cluster of several self-managed enterprises near Philadelphia.*

Horst Von Gizycki [35 Kassel, Im Rosental, 12, West Germany] has written an interesting essay entitled *Toward a Social Psychology of Loving Relationships* [Fraternite]: *some remarks on a project of developing sane communities.* The paper is both a theoretial piece and a report on an action-research project. The theoretical argument is that in order to actualize loving relationships, *we must basically*

alter our socialization processes. At first, says Gizycki, this may happen only in small kibbutz-like cooperatives, places of counter-cultures committed to love and reason.

The research project consists of two parts: (1) the establishment of a network of communes and cooperatives in order to have new groups learn from the experiences of the existing ones; and (2) preparation for an experiment leading to innovation, eventually to a new commune as a model for social change.

Horst will be visiting U.S. communal groups and social scientists again in the Spring of 1978.

Otohiko Okugawa [Dept. of Soc., Univ. Of Pittsburgh at Bradford, 217 Swarts Hall, Bradford, PA 16701] would like to know if anyone has information about two communal settlements in Virginia, *Lystra* [1899-1902] and *Friedheim* [1899-1900]. The Virginia Historical Society and the Virginia State Library were not able to provide helpful information.

Otohiko also says that he is interested in corresponding with other researchers who share his interest in 19th Century communal ventures.

J.R. [Bob] Newbrough [c/o Journal of Community Psychology, P.O. Box 319, George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, TN 37203] and Phil Brown [22 Dudley St., Cambridge, MA 02140] have sent out invitations to join their correspondence committee composed of professionals and workers interested in radical approaches to human services and to community applications of the behavioral sciences. If you are interested in participating, write Bob for more information.

Rich Collins [Chair, Division of Planning, School of Arch., The Univ. of VA, Charlottesville, VA 22903] writes that he thinks one of the subjects which should be discussed more is:

Can the intentional communities experience be seen as an early indicator of broader societal needs? If so, how can one transmit useful experience in a non-threatening manner to those who would subscribe to many of the values but who do not wish to disengage completely from the existing society?

Rich suggests Fred Hirsch's *The Social Limits to Growth* as a suggestive source of ideas and connections which might stimulate thinking on the subject.

Jud Jerome [Deep Run Farm, RD 7, Box 388A, York, PA 17402] has written a couple of very interesting articles for the *Green Revolution, Love and Justice, Spirit and Politics*, and *Middle Aged Males in Communes*. Both issues are available for \$1.50 ea. from The School of Living, P.O. Box 3233, York, PA 17402.

In the second article Jud candidly confronts the guilts, resentments and fears that have contributed to his growth:

Sometimes I advanced from guilt to resentment. Here I am washing dishes when others are not doing their share. If they did their share of the dishes, I might have the time to write the deathless poetry churning in my soul. Forget the injustice to me: they are undermining civilization by keeping me from my typewriter. But at the root of the resentment was guilt. I was wasting myself, I thought. I was not being productive. A man who is not productive is weak or lazy or irresponsible.

Deeper even than guilt was fear. I was losing my identity. The adolescent worries who he or she is. The identity crisis of the middle-aged male is that of feeling clear definition stripped away. I was becoming nothing. I used to be a professor, a writer, an expert. Now I am unemployed. I imagined myself among the unshaven in bread lines or on skid row. I was a failure.

Jud, nonetheless, is working hard with Kyla and Jubal at Deep Run both in rejuvenating the *Green Revolution* and in running numerous workshops related to communal living, decentralism, appropriate technology and other areas of the new localism. Write Jubal at the School of Living address for complete information on their outreach activities.

Ruth Shonle Cavan [Dept. of Soc., Northern Il Univ., DeKalb, Il 60115] and Elmer Schweider [Dept. of Soc., Iowa State Univ., Ames, IA] are currently concerned with questions of boundary maintenance in groups of Old Order Amish. Ruth says that they are in the midst of a content analysis of the Amish-Mennonite newspaper, *The Budget*, in the attempt to determine what social networks support boundary maintenance and which ones are a threat.

As I mentioned in the "brief" about Jane Ferrar, Ruth will be presenting a paper at the ASA meetings in Chicago. Her paper is an attempt to use Peter Blau's schema for exchange interaction as a tool for understanding how Amish groups entered into relationships with people outside the groups and were, at the same time, able to preserve their autonomy as a group.

Thomas Weisner [Neuro-Psychiat Inst., The Center for the Health Science, 760 Westwood Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90024] sent us information about a project which he and others have been working on for three years now. [Bern T. Eiduson--same address as Weisner] is the principal investigator for the project. They are following two hundred children who are growing up in a variety of conventional and non-conventional family lifestyles. The research group is comparing four groups: single mothers, unmarried couples, communal living groups, and nuclear families. One paper (with Joan Martin) he sent was *Learning Environments for Children in Conventional Married Families and Communes in California*. It deals with variations in child-rearing during infancy (to months of age). Another paper (with Madelein Kornfein and Joan Martin) deals also with the first six months, but focuses on the women as they change from "women into mothers." It's being published in *Women Into Wives*, [Chapman Gates, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1978, Chapter 11].

Thomas asks if there are any similar research projects on children in communes happening. I knew only of Zablon et. al. and a rumored project of Gertrude Huntington's which I've been unable to confirm. Please write Thomas if you know of research being done on families in communes, and send me a copy of your letter please. David Ruth, Twin Oaks Community, Merion Branch, Lousia, VA 23093].

Wallace Christen [Social Justice Institute, Lewis Univ., Route 53, Box 965, Lockport, Il 60441] has written and published a book on *Inspirational Mysticism and the Amana Community*. It's available for \$5.50 from the Lewis Univ. Bookstore, Lockport, IL 60441. Because its content lies outside my current interests I have not motivated myself to give it a fair reading but it appears to represent substantial and careful work.

Joseph Blasi [Institute for Cooperative Community, P.O. Box 298, Harvard Square Station, Cambridge, MA 02138] is now involved in a major push to get the Cooperative College Community (CCC) going somewhere in New England. He and a group of other academics are publishing the *CCC Newsletter* [available for \$5 from the above address] which is designed to keep members and prospective members apprised of developments toward the establishment of a Kibbutz-like cooperative college/community.

ONE SWALLOW DOES NOT MAKE A SUMMER

Japanese Women & Communes by Ann Kobayashi, Kimpu Highland Cooperative Farm, Japan



IN TER NATIONAL

When I first told friends in Europe that I was coming to live in Japan, many of them said, *You must be crazy - women there have a terrible time. They always have to eat in the kitchen and are never allowed out by their husbands!* Having already visited Japan for a few months, I assured them they did not know what they were talking about. I also told them I was going to live in a community which functioned as a cooperative, and things would be different there from society at large. However, after a while here, I realized reluctantly that although my friends had exaggerated, there was a basis of truth in their description.

I was born 35 years ago, had my formal education in Germany and Ireland, and after graduation spent 3 years as a family case-worker in England, working with *problem families*, in adoption and fostering cases. I went to Thailand for 15 months as a long-term volunteer with Service Civil International (SCI) founded in 1920. Excerpts from its constitution read: *Through the means of practical work, there spreads across the barriers which divide people a new spirit which will render the concept of violence less and less acceptable and the degradation of human dignity impossible. And, Encourages and experiments in new forms of community life with the objectives of fostering tolerance and questioning our own attitudes.*

I met Shigeo in Singapore (He had been with the Japanese branch of SCI since 1963 as a volunteer in India) and a year and half later, in 1968, we were married in Japan. SCI Japan has been running a project in a remote mountain dairy-farming cooperative since 1964. A few months after our marriage, we came to the community to work as resident SCI organizers. Among the major happenings during our 7 years here have been the births of our 4 sons.

There was another birth, too, but not one so easily pinpointed in time. This was my awareness that as a woman in Japan, I was very much a second-class citizen. Although I realized the extent of sexual discrimination in most known societies, it had not hit me so forcibly before: never before in my experience had it assumed such blatant form.

Our community consists of 5 families including our own. Each family sends one man to work in the cooperative dairy farm, in which all receive an equal wage. The older men cultivate their private family vegetable gardens and are assisted by their wives from time to time. The latter also run the family *minchiku* or guest-house room, which each family, except the SCI one, has. The younger women look after their children and the housework.

The total population comprises 8 men, 8 women and 8 children. We resemble an Israeli *moshav-shitufi* (*work-together, live-separately*) rather than a *kibbutz*. On the face of it, there seems to be a sensible division of work, each person doing a necessary job to keep the community going, and I would have thought that as each person's work is valuable, so each one would have an equal voice in decision-making, but this is not so.

We have a monthly community meeting (*jokai*) almost always attended only by the men, and a monthly work-planning meeting attended only by the younger men. One of the older women represents the community in the volunteer housewives' group in the nearest town, which organizes, with the help of the town office, a mother and baby clinic and arranges old people's health check-ups, etc. She attends these activities and circulates information about them to the community. Generally the women hold a meeting once a year to review events from their point of view, but, as the saying goes, *One swallow does not make a summer.*

The SCI Project here arranges a number of work-camps each year, during which the volunteers help on the farm. They stay at our Centre and we live in communal fashion, with everyone taking turns to work outside, cook, clean and so on, and all of us join in the evening discussions. We also have some study camps, and there are long-term volunteers who live with us throughout the year. It has become a tradition for the community to give a party for the volunteers during each camp. When we first came here, the community women sat at a separate table for these parties and any others for community visitors, and rarely joined in the general conversation. But this has gradually changed: now, all the tables are joined together

and the women sit at the bottom one. I feel that in our community people are filling certain roles out of habit. It is only when we have *outsiders* present that a certain artificial division of the sexes is observed nowadays at social gatherings, anyway. If we meet just as a community, the atmosphere is more relaxed, naturally, but it is never as free and easy as in a comparable group in my home-country.

In the SCI Centre itself we have about equal numbers of male and female volunteers participating in the various activities, a yearly average of 450 people staying with us. The SCI Movement has, from the beginning, stressed the importance of both men and women sharing in all the different types of work involved in running a camp and of the equality of the sexes in general. However, at the start of our residence here, I noticed a definite tendency on the part of the camp-leaders, when these were men, to treat the farm work as *real* work and the house-work as an easy sort of work-day for whichever volunteers were assigned to it. As I was *on* kitchen-work every day, I had a rather different view!

The job of cooking and cleaning for up to 30 volunteers took plenty of time and energy. Moreover, the *outside* volunteers tended to behave as they probably did at home, simply holding out their rice bowls to be refilled and leaving whatever mess they liked behind them when they walked out. This, however, gradually changed. One breakthrough was when we invited the community-wives to dinner during one camp and afterwards to a meeting to discuss the work of rural women. I remember my husband saying afterwards, as though he had just had a revelation, *You know, they're really busy all day long.*

In the SCI meetings here, I noticed that the Japanese girls almost always kept silence, and even when asked a direct question seemed to be extremely reluctant to give an opinion, usually confining themselves to a rather vapid remark. Yet, whenever the same girls and myself went out of the meeting to get tea, they seemed to burst into speech, and if I had someone to translate for me, I realized how often they came out with thoughtful questions and comments on the subject under discussion. But once back in the meeting again, they just sat with downcast eyes, quite silently!

...This was my awareness that as a woman in Japan I was very much a 2nd class citizen.

Slowly I began to understand the extent of indoctrination into the stereotyped role women undergo from babyhood in Japan. I heard over and over again the *explanation*: *As women, they can't express their ideas clearly, can't work as hard, are too emotional, etc., etc.* It was all very negative. What was women's role? The answer in Japan seemed to be to provide unquestioning support to men; never to assert themselves by expressing an opposite opinion to men publicly, even in friendly discussion; always to look pleasant, no matter how boorish the men were; to bustle around preparing food and drink at the men's bidding - in other words, to act as extremely well-trained servants. The reward for filling this role seemed meagre - especially the treatment accorded to the wife in public by older Japanese husbands. Should a wife make some mistake in serving guests, the stock responses on the part of the husband seemed to range from an impatient look to openly calling the unfortunate woman a fool!

I wondered how Japanese women could respect their husbands if they behaved so like spoilt, over-grown children. Were the women simply resigned to their lot and content to act as *mother* to their husbands in exchange for economic security and the joys of having children, or were they so conditioned that they really accepted men's version of them as inferior, weaker beings? I began to lose my self-confidence in such an atmosphere and to find it difficult to recall the time before coming to Japan when I held a fairly responsible job with a feeling of complete equality towards my male colleagues and had discussed ideas frankly with senior people of both sexes in my professional and social life.

Fortunately, several factors gave me fresh hope and encouragement. My husband, both because of the growth of our family, and his awareness of my expectations of our relationship, gradually took over a larger share in the care of the children and Centre, and his change in attitude naturally affected the other volunteers. When he took up his dishes and left them in the kitchen, they did too. If I was busy with one of the babies, he served himself, and so did they. The girls, seeing this consideration for me, became more open in expressing their ideas in meetings he chaired. Another big factor was and is that we have always had a number of foreign volunteers here. Because they usually speak no Japanese, they naturally direct their questions and general comments through me. Many of them in fact comment on women's status in Japan, usually disapprovingly, and thus my husband and other Japanese here realize that it is not just a personal idiosyncrasy of mine to feel that women in Japan have a poor deal. Also we have a growing number of young Japanese of both sexes, who come here to find out about a different way of life. They are dissatisfied with the roles their parents expect them to fill, e.g. salary-man or housewife. They see communal living as one experiment with a different approach to life: one in which each member can grow to full human potential.

During the time they spend here we try to live with them as an extended family but without the rigid roles of the ordinary family. Everyone has equal responsibilities and equal privileges. Even on the necessarily short-term basis of any one group here, the advantages are enormous. Everyone is free to contribute suggestions and actions, and this atmosphere which we create, it is very beautiful to see the way both sexes help with our children. Japanese men's gentleness to small children has always impressed me. Foreign men, especially those from northern Europe where it used to be considered *unmanly* for men to take much notice of the very young, are encouraged by the example of the Japanese men to lose their inhibitions and enjoy the wonderful world of children.

During each camp, I try to join in the farm-work at least once while Shigeo takes my place with the children. In this way we can both appreciate better the demands of each kind of work, as well as benefiting from the change-over. We hope to demonstrate to the volunteers and to others in the community that exchange of roles does not mean disaster. It seems obvious that children need protection, care, communication and love from and with a fairly constant circle of adults. Biologically and emotionally the child's natural parents are usually inclined to fulfil these functions. But the traditional family structure where the mother stays at home and the father goes out to work too often results in a stunted development in the woman because of lack of social and intellectual stimulation and the exclusion of the man from many of the joys of family life: sometimes he is confined, because of his hours of work to being simply an economic provider.

In Japan, the women often behave just as servants do, i.e. they display polite deference to the *master's* face, but effectively exclude him emotionally. Instead, they invest all their emotional life in their children, through whom they can lead a vicarious life - for instance by exerting undue pressure on

them in their education. The men often turn to other women, but here again they lose out, as these are often *paid* women in the entertainment world. The children, of course, suffer too - from too much of mother's attention and too little of father's. For some women, the stress of being confined to the care of small children without a break, especially in the alienating atmosphere of the big city, becomes too much. The woman's resentment can turn against herself or the children, the ultimate protest being suicide.

Human beings have a need to feel themselves in control of their lives. Where women have been dominated by men and have managed to survive psychically, they often themselves exert excessive control over their children. When these are grown up, they seek an outlet by tyrannizing their daughters-in-law, thus ironically aiding and abetting their own oppression. Some women's groups in Europe and the USA are trying to solve the problem of women by demanding the 24-hour care-nurseries run by the State so that they can go out to work. This I feel is misguided. Personally I would be very reluctant to leave our children in the hands of any State institution with its probable frequent staff changes and all the dangers inherent in anything run by as cumbersome and remote a body as the State. The communal way of life would seem to offer a far better solution, but we have heard of a number of communal experiments in Japan and elsewhere which have broken down because of the male/female problem.

Melford Spiro, in his book, *Kibbutz: Venture in Utopia*, has stated that if the kibbutz on which he based the book should ever disintegrate, *the problem of the woman* will be one of the main contributing factors. Yet one of the basic premises on which this kibbutz was founded was equality of the sexes. Women were to be freed from the domestic role by means of the various institutions of collective living, e.g., communal kitchen, laundry, nurseries, etc. Difficulties have arisen, however, because of the need to be near the nurseries to feed their children resulting in many of the younger women being assigned the *service* jobs in the kibbutz--cleaning, cooking, etc. Moreover, much greater prestige attaches to the economically productive jobs in the fields and workshops. The women resent this discrimination. The choice confronting them is either to give up the maternal link to such a degree that some women may feel there is no point in becoming a mother in the first place, or to accept a lower status role in the kibbutz.

...women living in communes in Japan are already one step ahead of their sisters in the larger society outside...

There are similar tales of discontent in Japanese communes. Although formally they declare the sexes to be equal, the influences of the pervasive culture soon show themselves. Many women decide they would prefer to be bossed around by just one man rather than living at the beck and call of a larger number. Surely the root of the problem lies in the failure of both sexes to appreciate the value of certain kinds of work. Of course there is more immediate economic return in, for instance, cultivating, packing and dispatching oranges than in cooking for the orange-workers. But why should we think only in this short-term materialistic way? Whenever women complain about the burdens of domestic life and child-care, men make a big show of telling them what an important job they are doing. If men really mean this, then they must make sure that women are enabled to have an equal voice in decision-making and are not penalized for doing the vitally necessary jobs they do.

But women have to push for improvement themselves, because it is most unlikely that any of the men will go against their own male-group feeling in order to take up the women's cause.

I think that women living in communes in Japan are already one step ahead of their sisters in the larger society outside: they presumably have some community of interests and a more manageable scale on which to work for change. What they have to start to do--and it is not going to be easy--is to begin thinking and questioning the present structure. Are they gaining and contributing as much as the men in the commune, and if not, why not?

In Japan, this search for change will be extra difficult. The Japanese are brought up in the belief that it is selfish to voice their own personal opinions in such a way as to disturb the harmony of whatever group they happen to be in. Of course, if women begin asking for greater participation in all areas of communal life, they are bound to upset the equanimity of the men. I have heard the tone of contempt in some men's voices when dealing with a question or suggestion from women, and it is not to be laughed off lightly. But women have to push for improvement themselves, because it is most unlikely that any of the men will go against their own male-group feeling in order to take up the women's cause. This is particularly true in Japan, where men form such a solid group.

I know some Japanese women who have liberated themselves and I can say that their freedom from fear leads to an increase in love and respect for their men if the latter have accepted the women's legitimate urge to fulfill their potential as unique individuals. Such women are more willing to work for the communal group, rather than just trying to get something out of it for *their* children and *their* living-quarters. They have a more balanced attitude towards their children, who consequently have more room for growth.

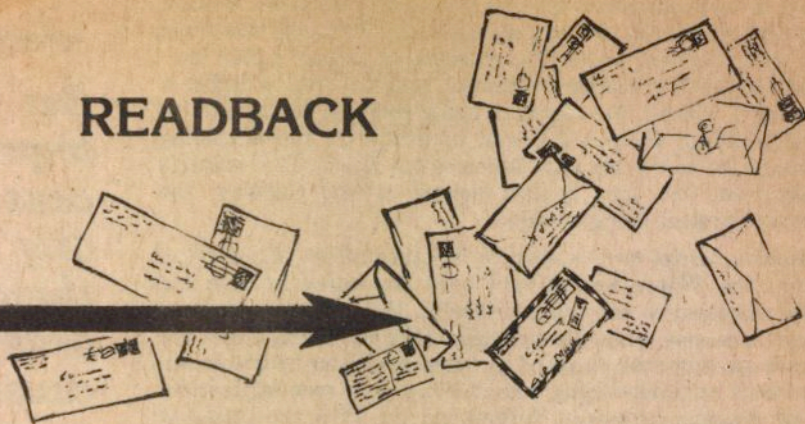
In this kind of liberated commune, there should be room for couples who do not want to have children, and for men and women who do not want to marry. This is important in a society like Japan, where women who do not want to marry face big difficulties both economically and socially. Even if some of us are lucky enough to be living in a commune which allows us full scope for development and to have enlightened men around, we should not forget all our other sisters who are not so well placed. For me as a woman, moving from Europe to Japan could be compared with a black person moving from the northern U.S.A. to South Africa.

Whatever situation we are in, let us:

- [1] *seek to understand the historical background to women's oppression by reading and discussion;*
- [2] *realise that, but for a handful of courageous human beings, our position today would be far worse than it actually is;*
- [3] *work out a plan of campaign to carry on the struggle from whichever point we are at;*
- [4] *act not in anger and bitterness, but with the conviction that bringing the goal of greater human liberation nearer is everyone's responsibility.* □



READBACK



NEIL SELDMAN WRITES

Dear Friends:

As an active participant in the *New Localism* movement, I was pleased to see David's valuable discussion (*The New Localism - An Ideology for Our Age?*, *Communities* #25) and look forward to his insights for the future development of *new localist* theory. (Incidentally, Rich Kazis and I are preparing an article, *The Problem of Karl Marx*, which will explore the relationship between the decentralist movement and the traditional left movement. We will be happy to share it with you.) But I am also concerned with the use of some terminology: in particular, the term *ideology*.

It is an important term, with a long and complex history that need not be broached here, except to point out the most significant conceptual contribution made to this history by Marx and Engels.

For them, ideology is the conscious or unconscious presentation of ideas which hide specific interests and which are used for the purpose of maintaining the status quo of political and economic power and authority. Ideology is composed of two elements: the hidden purpose of those in power; and the false consciousness of the rest of society who accept as legitimate the ideas and culture of the dominating groups. Marx and Engels explain this clearly enough: Law, morality, religion are to [the proletariat] so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many bourgeois interests.

In our time we may substitute for *proletarian* all exploited, polluted and alienated people; and for *bourgeois* we may substitute the controlling groups in our society. Marx and Engels are telling us to be critical of all ideas emanating from ruling groups. Thus, for instance, when the energy corporations and government refer to the *need* for nuclear energy, we must understand it as a *need* for a certain type of economy and society, which they currently own, control and enjoy. Without expanded energy sources and economic growth, a Mobil Oil ad tells us, we will have class wars in America.

The power to control ideas and language is just as important as the control these corporations have over capital investment, production, and markets. George Orwell also warned us of the specific danger posed by blurred terms and euphemisms to the quality of political life. During the early stage of the Indo-China war, he pointed to the term *pacification* used to redirect attention from the realities of bombing defenseless villages,

machine-gunning cattle and burning huts. By allowing those with a specific purpose to define concepts and phrases, popular reaction to real events can be blunted, delayed and ultimately made futile.

It hardly matters what particular term we use to describe the phenomenon of ideology. But it is necessary to have a precise one so that we are aware of and react to the reality of ideological (understood as having the essential critical component) thought, action and institutions in our society.

David's use of the term *ideology* parallels the watered-down, non-critical use provided us by contemporary political scientists, essentially, any group of people with a coherent thought pattern and action program has an ideology. It is non-perjorative and neutral.

I feel it is crucial that we understand that the new localism, decentralist or community control movement not think of itself as ideological. It has no hidden purpose or vested interest. It people to control their jobs, homes, community and environment. The movement has an emerging political theory, but not an ideology. Political theory can be defined as speculation about ideology. Political theory can be defined as speculation about how to best organize our political life to achieve a good and just society for all.

As I suggested (*Neighborhood Planning Councils, Communities* #25) the specific values shared by the movement's political theory currently include an explicit commitment to guarantee that all people have jobs in work places that allow for the creative development of our inherent artistic talents; that all people be assured that they will be cared for when they are sick, or elderly; that all families have decent houses and supportive communities to reside in; that our environment and life support systems be restored and protected; and that America adopt a democratic foreign policy which would support these goals throughout the world. While other specific values may be articulated, there is no hidden agenda; no one lurks in ambush behind these values.

The movement also has an effective multi-faceted and multi-level action program. Thus the theory is developing and changing as we learn and acquire more power. Activity and theory constantly react on each other.

The future will see how well we accomplish our goals, and whether or not we recede into ideological forms. It is up to us to make and maintain a democratic, participatory reality: the only one that can guarantee a safe and ample life for us all. At this time having a clear consciousness about who we are and what we are doing is very important.

Sincerely, *Neil Seldman*

REPLY TO NEIL SELDMAN

Dear Neil,

Thank you for raising a very important issue, one that I glossed over in the original article. It is certainly important to understand that ideology in a class-based society is an important tool of oppression; and to the extent that my use of the term leads one to the conclusion that I'm advocating the replacement of one tool of oppression for another (or to the conclusion that I'm talking about replacing one *coherent thought pattern and action program* with another) then I'm merely muddying the water.

I meant to be using the term ideology in a manner parallel to that of Charles Belleheim (*Cultural Revolution and Industrial Organization in China: Changes in Management and the Division of Labor*: NY Monthly Review Press, 1974) when he contrasts bourgeois ideology with proletarian ideology. It is the former which is an example of ideology as a mask for the *hidden agendas* of a ruling class. The proletarian ideology, on the other hand, is the explanatory matrix within which can take place the ongoing generation of *correct ideas*. It is this sort of ideological development that Bettelheim is talking about in a statement which is almost a paraphrase of one in your letter. You say, *The movement also has an effective multi-faceted and multi-level action program. Thus the theory is developing and changing as we learn and acquire more power. Activity and theory constantly react with each other.* He says, *The materialist view of history clearly shows that progress in the direction of a classless society requires the continuous transformation of the objective relations and of ideology through successive stages of offensive and consolidation.* This dialectical development of conditions and ideology is what I termed the *emergence of ideology*. And if, as you say, *we may substitute for proletarian all exploited, polluted and alienated people*, and if the ideology we are talking about is one that embraces economic as well as political democracy (economic as well as political equality) then we should be able to use the term ideology freed of its derogative (class-based) content. It is certainly more powerful, and I believe more accurate, than *political theory*.

I'm looking forward to seeing your article exploring the relationship between the decentralist movement and the traditional left. Herb Gintis, by the way, wrote me that as far as the charge that the *new localism* is really a part of the *new reformism* goes, he doesn't know of anything that goes beyond his new book (with Sam Bowles, *Schooling in Capitalist Society*, [NY: Basic Books, 1977]).

As for gaining a fleshed-out understanding of the term *proletarian* in our age, Harry Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degredation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (NY: Monthly Review Press, 1974) and the July/August issue of *Monthly Review*, which consists entirely of responses to Braverman, are invaluable. Thank you again for writing.

David

NEIL'S RESPONSE TO DAVID'S RESPONSE

Dear David,

Thank you for sharing your response with me. I still have some questions. If my understanding of Marx is correct, the proletariat has no ideology. Its historic mission and goals are universal and would free all people from oppression. The proletarian insight was therefore scientific and truthful and by

definition non-ideological. It is important to note that Lenin felt the proletariat did have an ideology; and needed one to achieve and hold power. I feel this indicates the crucial difference between Marx's view of the revolutionary process -- spontaneous reaction on the part of the masses -- and Lenin's view -- the need for a vanguard to push and then control the masses in the direction of a revolution. Lenin's revolutionary ideology was successful, but has resulted in an exploiting state socialism, which has its corresponding oppressive ideology.

I prefer to use *political theory* to describe the *new localism* movement. I hope it does not become elitist and ideological -- either in its struggle for power, or after it achieves state power. Let's keep the dialogue going.

Sincerely, *Neil Seldman*

Neil Seldman is a staff-member and Co-director of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance. Beyond political theory, he is particularly involved with neighborhood political development in Washington, DC [about which he wrote in issue #25] and the even more down-to-earth realities of waste-retrieval systems.



MOSHE MATSUBA WRITES

Dear Communities:

No. 25 is a fine issue indeed. Yet there is almost a general consensus among the writers of the main articles to be pessimistic! Insofar as this springs from a determination to be utterly honest about limitations, it can be perfectly justified. At the same time, though, I feel that the central essence of commune endeavor is being lost sight of. If we can focus on that afresh, perhaps we can drive ahead more confidently.

There seem to be two main difficulties blocking the way: the first, that you are called *Communities* and not *Communes*, so including even mere city neighborhoods, as their Planning Councils article evidences, and the second, the fact that American communards are overwhelmingly concentrated on the intensification of human relations, often associated with so-called consciousness-raising. (This bears supreme witness to the social bankruptcy of American society, but it is not necessarily the peak item in communes, however desirable.) The first takes you sometimes far away from actual communes into important, but nevertheless comparatively fringe areas of the Alternative Society as a whole - not that we want to break the link: certainly not! The second narrows the commune concept so much that I suggest even the very core gets lost.

In spite of increasing consideration of the kibbutz, a more practical point than ever, seeing its current inspired helpfulness in the matter of American commune federation now rightly seen as fundamental for solid future growth, the crucial point of the kibbutz is not, I fear, yet being widely recognized. It is surely that of *democracy as total as human beings are capable of, in an absolutely inclusive life-framework, on a moderately large scale.*

All the three items included in the last sentence are indispensable and together constitute the central essence to which I alluded at the beginning of this letter. This implies that any guru or leader-conducted commune is not fostering free individual responsibility for fellow-humans to the utmost; that any half-and-half commune with independent family incomes, housing and services has not really changed its life-style on to a higher level of social integration; and that the immense

economies and opportunities of a substantially self-contained, self-governing village group, enjoying a coordination of widely varying talents in art, science, industry, agriculture and education, etc., are not attained. (Such a *village* can and should sometimes be in an urban setting, although the difficulties are then much greater.)

Of course, one wants no slavish imitation of the original kibbutz. The Japanese communes, although sometimes kibbutzic in structure, have been rather like American ones, trying to change human nature and reach superb membership-harmony. Results have mostly been very modest, and the Japanese Commune Movement is now swinging over more directly to the kibbutz pattern in setting up its own commune, as thus being more likely to fulfill real social needs. But the kibbutz can only be an approximate model, for the Japanese have yet to know how to replace hierarchy by democracy. Nor can American youth follow very differently-based Israeli footsteps at all closely.

The triple kibbutz essence I have mentioned, though, can well be applied much more widely today. In his profound article in #25, George W. Clark sees the kibbutz and lesser communes in general as insufficient because tainted by our crude natures brought in from outside without disciplined modification. Such criticism is true in itself - as that kibbutzim are commonly middle-class materialist in outlook, and so on. They are. But so far from invalidating them, it still leaves them on a far higher plane than surrounding society, full of the same and more faults to a much greater extent. By distributing social responsibility to the utmost, the kibbutz does educate, through its very life style (learning by doing - always the best way) towards deeper humanity.

Ruth Benedict's (posthumous) concept of social synergy, rescued by Abraham Maslow and his students (*Psychology Today*, June 1970 - I do not have later references) applies in full force to communes: a high synergy society is one in which doing good for oneself does good also to one's fellows; whereas in the low-synergy society of capitalism, self-benefit usually exploits and impoverishes others. A handful may reach the true communion George Clark idealistically pleads for; but obviously no large number will attempt the philosophical discipline required. The very real improvements achieved by the kibbutz, though, are attainable with not impracticable effort by hundreds of thousands undoubtedly, the first hundred thousand in Israel not being uniquely superhuman.

Within a kibbutz of a few hundred people, actual communion Clark-style, may well be attained among a select group of intimate friends: sub-groups are always free to develop, so why not? The unified, egalitarian, shared living fosters them. Mr. Clark will have vastly greater difficulty in creating them outside in the sordid capitalist jungle. I do not negate him or his many sympathisers I know to exist: I merely want to give him a better environment for creating communion and one in which those who cannot achieve his ideal will at least enjoy the high-synergy effects of 100% cooperative living.

In your same issue, Pat Conover wrote a superfine analysis of commune leadership, so subtle a matter. He is probably fully conversant with kibbutz leadership problems, too involved to consider here, too. But why should he not bring out the advantages of a larger-scale, specifically egalitarian (if with some failures) persistently person-changing, kibbutzic structure in this context?

Vince's fascinating and vital international article is again probably justified in most of his kibbutz criticism, but just as in the Clark case, there is no invalidation of kibbutzim necessitated thereby at all. They still represent the peaks of human society (apart, perhaps, from some rare true *communions* somewhere) in our as yet most imperfectly-evolved humankind. There must be constant struggle to overcome

their shortcomings, but, as Vince himself says, they can be both stimulating and genuinely helpful. So why (if we stick to their aforementioned triple essence) need he conclude that *communism* (that vague term!) is not only not applicable worldwide (true) but has few implications for North America, the communards there being able to relax (I would not advise overmuch relaxation in communes, although overstrain is undesirable!) and leave others outside? - and that's that.

Although I do not know the details, I gather that the difficulties of Lime Saddle have been unfairly undue, and I sympathise with Vince's pessimism which could have arisen there in part. But, remembering the kibbutz as the invigorating example it is, failings admitted, could he not have a slightly more inspiring message for *Communities* than that? (Incidentally, Givat Brenner is not a desert oasis kibbutz: it is in something like a green-belt, orange-growing area near Tel Aviv's southern satellite-towns. There must have been some confusion here.)

David's valuable article, also, looks rather as though it is over on the pessimistic side, although this impression may be influenced by its bad luck in being placed among the commune-deprecators in your challenging but rather despondent No. 25. For David, in rightly stressing the essential need for an effective ideology in communes, chooses a very general revised American-dream or *Greening of America* sort from outside, available for the shallowest kind of *communities* as well as for actual communes. So far from its being irrelevant or invalid, communes may well act as spearheads for it, to their own as well as to the general advantage, and I await his second article, explaining it further, with the utmost interest.

But it is surely too diffuse and diluted to focus commune effort sufficiently, unless it is closely tied up with the model of a fair-sized, inclusively varied, direct-democracy, kibbutzic commune-structure, if in miniature. My implication here is that ideology and structure, theory and practice, must march together in communes: if we choose an ecological ideology, for instance, we must organise our commune ecologically to give ourselves and others a convincing whole. A broad *New Localism*, without simultaneous tying-up with somewhat self-contained, unified self-government (which David may take for granted, but in fact is commonly and fatally ignored) again makes the commune look rather inessential (perhaps resuscitated Town Meetings would do instead).

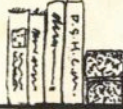
So, in conclusion, and ending at the beginning of the so-interesting #25, I have to support Kat Kincaid's initial plea not to start new communes this year. Having seen the Israeli kibbutz lately, as well as Vince having done so, she knows that it is wiser first to strengthen existing communes, rather than add yet more tiny ones which are little out of the everyday world, being utterly non-self-sufficient as a rule, which are up against terribly close face-to-face psychological problems which may have a less-than-perfect leader who is not cumbered by egalitarian democratic process, and which are not throwing all their resources into a pool but are living half separately and half together, possibly leading to increasing intolerable stresses. So, with Kat, I am a little on the negative side too!

In actual fact, though, I am, of course, very ready to compromise. Tiny close-relationship communes will continue and occasionally reach remarkable communion. And considerable kibbutzim are not readily foreseeable in general. I am ready to accept mini-ones around 20-50 members for a start: in fact, the prospects for our new Movement mini-kibbutz in Hokkaido just now are not even as good as that!

utmost good wishes, *Mose Matsub*

ed. note - Mose is the editor of the Kibbutz-oriented newsletter *Communarity*, available from The Japanese Commune Movement, 2083 Sakae-cho, Imaichi-shi, Tochigi-ken, 32112 JAPAN. Mose has also collaborated on a recent book, *The Communes of Japan*, available for \$5, postage included. □

Bookshelf



Here are brief descriptions of 5 books related to intentional community. Our free brochure contains a complete listing of some 35 books on cooperative life and work.

Working Communally: Patterns and Possibilities by David French and Elena French. Hdbk. 269 pp. \$10.50. Communal workplaces, in the Frenches' vision, are industrial and agrarian enterprises run on a human scale by people who live and work together cooperatively. The Frenches plausibly present a case for such organizations as the basis of a decentralized society, describing 3 contemporary communities they see as partial successes in carrying out this vision.

Families of Eden: Communes and the New Anarchism by Judson Jerome. Hdbk. 171 pp. \$7.95. Pat Conover, a sociologist and member of Shalom Community, says in his communal bibliography, *This is the most valuable book on the contemporary commune movement.*

Neighborhood Power: The New Localism by David Morris and Karl Hess pbk. \$3.45. Morris and Hess have provided the beginnings of a handbook, one detailing the methods which intentional communities and other cooperative groups can use to expand the boundaries of their sharing to include more than their own memberships. Drawing upon their experiences in the Adams-Morgan neighborhood of Washington, DC., the authors explain how, through demonstration experiments, cooperative groups can persuade their neighbors to regain economic and political control of their own lives.

Beyond Marriage and the Nuclear Family by Robert Thamm. Pbk. 231pp \$3.95. A strong case for the commune as the environment which will facilitate transcending interpersonal difficulties.

Communes: Creating and Managing the Collective Life by Rosabeth Moss Kanter (ed) pbk. 544 pp. \$6.50. ...articulates many of the problems of living in community.

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Production for this issue was done by a class at **Alternative East**, a high school in the Philadelphia area.

This project had its debut in 1976 as the New American Way, a study of communes, natural food and Bob Dylan. Since then we have progressed as the Communities Magazine/Alternative Lifestyles class, which has been running for 2 consecutive cycles [semester]. Technically our school is a public school, although we practice more "non-violent" forms of learning. Our school [for some] teaches not how to learn "schoolwork" but how to learn from experience. Students also get a say in running the school government [and in a sense have the ultimate power since the school would go under without the students, who could always go back to regular school] and teachers are as much students as vice-versa. School does not have to hurt. Our particular class has put a lot of time into trying to be as much of a group as possible.

The magazine project was initiated by Chip Hedler, who developed the idea after helping put out a previous issue of Communities. Then came a class of interested workers who learned all the magazine talk and went to meet Cynthia and Rachel. The real work didn't come until late in May when the cycle was already over. 3 of the class left: Shari went on to a health food store, Nina went farming and Melanie took to drama.

Sarah, me [Katie] and Joe were in both cycles and are the bigshots with the rubber cement. When the cycle ended, Jeff, Pat and Roy from last year's class joined us.

Our new people are Jack, Ben, Brian and Vicki. All of these people [except for me and Sarah] are inexperienced in layout, so give us a big hand! We did a very professional job, didn't we?

Most of our organizational activity should be credited to Mikki from Twin Oaks who has worked on Communities from time to time, and really enjoyed driving us crazy by switching page layouts around.

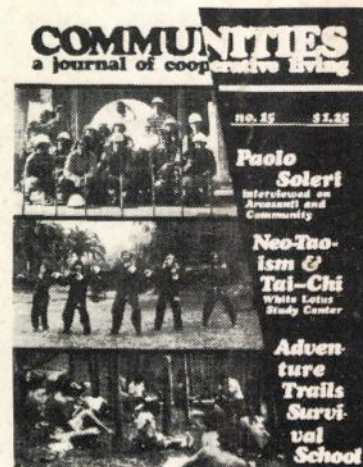
It is interesting to note that the 4 women who stuck with this are born in December or January. I'm sure that says something for us Capricorns [Aquarians? Saggis?].



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