

IN A NUTSHELL

MENTAL PATIENTS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER
3191 W. 10th Avenue, Vancouver 8, B.C.
Phone: 738-5177; 738-1422

No. 15 Oct. 1972

NDP - BETTER DAYS FOR US

Hail! Hail! The long, black night of Social Credit is over! The dawn of a new era has arrived!

No longer will the Socreds block the efforts of downtrodden people to improve their lives. For the first time in B.C. history we have reason to be hopeful. Local, progressive groups can now imagine moving forward to build the communities we so desperately need.

Where we had received indifference and opposition, we can now expect help. Where we had been made to feel impotent, we can now begin to participate.

The NDP is a people's party. It is the only party that can make legitimate claim to representing ordinary working and poor people. Its first commitments are not to big business and foreign investors, but to the aged, the handicapped, welfare mothers, children and the workers of this province.

We in MPA have good reason to be optimistic. The Social Credit government treated mental patients like garbage, using Riverview as the dump. Premier Barrett, a social worker who is familiar with the conditions at Riverview, knows what a sham it is as a "therapeutic" institution. He has pledged to abolish it and to decentralize mental health services.

Certainly, mental patients can expect changes for the better. The questions for us at this point are: What relationship can MPA have with the new government, and what can we do to contribute to the changes?

EXISTING TIES BETWEEN MPA AND NDP

Before answering these questions, let us review the relationship which has already developed between MPA and NDP.

Until very recently MPA has followed a more-or-less official policy of not engaging in partisan politics. Beside the alienation from such politics most of us have felt under 20 years of the Bennett regime, the decision to be "apolitical" was also based on the realistic appraisal that supporting a particular party would jeopardise our grants. (This in itself is a comment on the politically restrictive climate under Social Credit.)

While we had agreed not to go to bat publicly for any party, we had no objection to receiving party support. It is significant that only the NDP took enough interest in MPA to find out what we were doing and to give us their official backing. At their Provincial Convention in May of 1971, resolutions were passed in the Health Workshops explicitly supporting MPA.

The resolutions read:

- "That the NDP support:
- Self-help groups (e.g., Mental Patients Association) in the mental health field.
 - These groups to provide 24 hour, user-controlled centers (emergency, drop-in, social etc.) that would extend but not encroach on existing services.
 - Funding from government for these services."

(cont. p. 2, see "NDP")

(cont. from p. 1)

NDP -- BETTER DAYS

And at an unofficial level, it is surprising to note how much contact we have had with NDP individuals--MLA's and other prominent party members. This contact, we believe, is indicative of the sort of people who lead the party: election or no election, they do take an interest in grass roots people's groups like ours.

When MPA was just being founded, Dave Barrett suggested we get in touch with Ray Parkinson. Parkinson, who is a psychiatrist, NDP ex-MLA and long-standing critic of the backward mental health policies of the Socreds, supported MPA from the outset. He wrote us several letters of recommendation which enabled us to obtain funding. In March of 1971, he put a successful motion before the Section of Psychiatry to endorse MPA's policies and goals. This endorsement greatly helped us in establishing our credibility in our early stages.

Norm Levi, social worker with the John Howard Society and now Minister of Rehabilitation, has referred several of his clients to us and has always cooperated with us in securing housing, welfare and jobs for people leaving hospitals or prisons.

Phyllis Young, MLA for Vancouver Little Mountain, sat on a committee to whom we had applied for a grant through the Rehabilitation Department. She argued on our behalf strongly and against considerable opposition. Thanks largely to her efforts we did receive the grant, a salary for the coordinator of the crafts program.

Rosemary Brown, Burrard MLA along with Norm Levi, not long ago received an (anonymous) phone call from a "neighbour" of ours who said that while she thought ex-patients should live in the community, she didn't want us living in her community. Rosemary told her it was our community too.

Mike Musclow, MPA farm coordinator, has had contact with Peter Rolston, MLA for Dewdney, the riding where our new farm is located.

Hilda Thomas, who was unfortunately

defeated in the Point Grey riding, spent an evening at the drop-in center with her husband, Phil, playing and singing B.C. folksongs which they have been collecting for the past 20 years.

It is not politically irrelevant that NDP candidates and MLA's are people with whom we can both work and spend a comfortable evening talking and singing. One blinks with amazement to think that they and others like them are in power representing us. Such a situation was unthinkable under Social Credit. Imagine Gaglardi in our living room, playing the banjo and singing "Hallelujah, I'm a Bum".

OUR DECISION TO SUPPORT NDP

In July of this year, MPA began inching toward taking a more political stand. We started Politics Night meetings once a week. Naturally, once the election was announced, we began discussing it. We discovered that almost all of us who attended the meetings were planning to vote NDP. Further, we agreed to work as a caucus within MPA to canvass for the NDP.

We drew up a list of policy demands (see page 7) for changes in the mental health field and invited Rosemary Brown (MLA for Burrard where the drop-in center and west end residence are located) and Phyllis Young and Roy Cummings (MLA's for Little Mountain where the east end residence is located) to attend the Politics Night meeting on August 17th.

We spent the evening with the candidates, actively discussing our demands and the NDP position on mental health in general. We reached a strong consensus on the need for change and on some of the directions it ought to take.

Because the Little Mountain candidates were running against ex-Attorney General Peterson and therefore had a more uphill battle than did Rosemary Brown and Norm Levi, we agreed to help canvass in the Little Mountain riding. We distributed more than 1,000 NDP leaflets, and are happy to have had a hand in defeating Peterson and in making Little Mountain an NDP riding.

(cont. p. 12, see "Future")

THE WAR BETWEEN PEOPLE-PEOPLE AND BUSINESS-PEOPLE

A PEACE



PROPOSAL

The special general meeting called by some MPA members on September 8th brought into the open some of the many problems facing the group. We seem to be moving in a million different directions; deep divisions are forming; accusations and feelings of guilt are rampant.

Many of the problems are the sheer result of growth. But simply recognizing this fact is not enough. We have to come together as a group, first to clearly identify the main problems and then to take active steps to solve them.

Two camps seem to exist--the people camp and the business camp. A lot of hostility has developed between them. The people people (mainly the members) feel that the business people (mainly the coordinators) are too pre-occupied just to spend time relating to others. The coordinators, always saddled with responsibilities, feel guilty about ignoring the members and also feel resentful that they get so little help from the members.

Along with responsibility goes power. Most of us recognize that the power in MPA is distributed among too few people.

The answer to these problems has more to do with changing the structure of MPA than with changing our attitudes. Coordinators can't feel more open to people if they have 12 hours of work to do each day. Similarly, members can't help feeling resentful if they are ignored and have no power. And members can't share in responsibilities if coordinators don't have the time to work with members and to involve them in the daily tasks of MPA. A vicious circle.

A balance has to be struck between people things and business things. Everyone should have an opportunity to be involved in both. To begin with we need a better communication system so that members who are too busy to keep up with what's happening can find out what goes on in and out of meetings. We need typed and complete reports of business and general meetings to be posted at all four centers. MPA HOME NEWS, a weekly bulletin of recent meetings and upcoming events, is a start in improving communication.

Hopefully, in the future, when people attend meetings they'll be more knowledgeable about the items on the agenda, will contribute more of their own items and will be able to participate rather than simply react to decisions already laid out in previous meetings.

Spreading information, however, is not enough. We need a new structure within which the barriers between coordinators and members will be broken down at both the people level and the business level.

The following is a very rough first draft of an idea about how we can move toward this goal.

We could break down into small groups of about 10 people each. Every group would consist of one or two coordinators and 8 or 9 members. Each group would be both an encounter group and a business group.

As an encounter group, the ten people would meet about once a week to relate to and encounter each other, and to discuss

(cont. p. 6, see "The War")

editorials

SPECIFICS ON MALE CHAUVINISM

In spite of all the talk about male chauvinism in the MPA, male chauvinism hasn't ceased to exist and probably won't for the next hundred years or more. The sad and frustrating fact is that men in general are so ignorant of women's feelings that their only defence, if confronted by an angry woman, is to dump all the blame on her, to label her a sick chick and not to talk to her any more. We'll never achieve mutual understanding this way.

I was especially disappointed when I brought up "male chauvinism" at the general un-meeting and was asked to be more specific - by a man, of course. I felt degraded and embarrassed at the time. For my own peace of mind I'd like to be very specific now:

I hate to listen to sad life stories which are followed up by: "I get good vibes from you. I want you to come to my room so that we can smoke dope and get to know each other better."

I hate to give you a ride to your doctor's, welfare, etc. and then to be asked: "Why don't we go to my apartment and have a good time."

I hate to turn you down because you want me to drive you 50 miles out of town - alone - preferably on my day off.

I hate being cornered in the washroom by a lovesick male.

I hate invitations for a cup of coffee followed up by: "Let's go to Stanley Park."

I hate being told: "I want you to be happy." (Meaning: I want to fuck you.) I never said that I am unhappy.

I hate being pulled down on a bed by a male who wears just a coat.



All this happens time and again at the MPA. Please, dear men, remember I'm supposed to work with the MPA. I do not consider the MPA as happy hunting grounds.

-Ursula Honold

VIOLENCE - REASON OR UNREASON?

Human grief and misery reach profound depths daily in Vancouver and elsewhere. People who have been continually left by the wayside in "this best of all possible worlds" are subjected to varying degrees of violence in their every step. Increasingly their response is violent as was the case last month of Thomas Phillips who, on August 16th, shot and killed both his psychiatrist, Lily Chan, and himself. It was his last act, born out of despair and carried out in desperation.

What kinds of violence do people face daily and how do these extreme reactions come about?

Violence is when a person cannot gain a share of the tremendous wealth our system generates. Violence is poverty.

Violence is when people are labelled "mental patient," "unemployable," "lazy," "welfare case," "criminal," etc. Violence is bureaucratic classification.

Violence occurs in institutions where people are denied rights and are subjected to regimented routines in schools, hospitals, manpower offices, factories, prisons, government bureaucracies and on and on.

Violence comes from fear and distrust of fellow human beings, and is socially brought about by the above kinds of relationships in which our needs are

EDITORIAL

subordinated to the pursuit of wealth and power by the 5% of our society which already has these things.

In other words, violence is not just brute force. It runs through the length and breadth of our system, a system which groups like ours should begin to recognize and change.

People are killed everyday, not just through individual acts of violence, but through social violence--through disease which many cannot afford to treat, through industrial "accidents" caused by a boss's

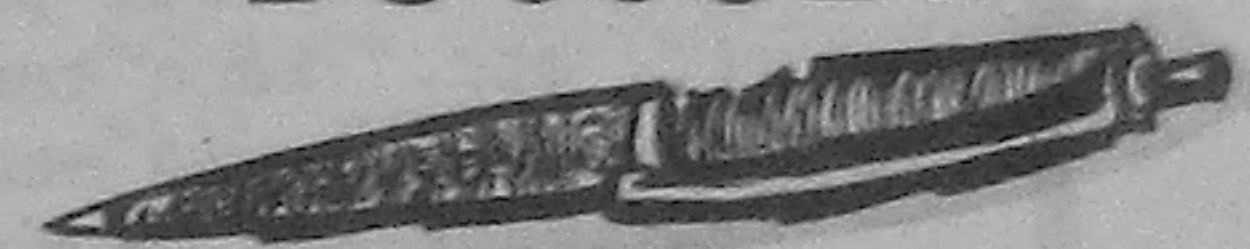
unwillingness to spend money on safety.

Our response to these events should not be to mourn, but to organize to see that they come to an end once and for all.

Lily Chan and Thomas Phillips were equally victims of a world over which they had lost all control. We must work together to ensure that control is put back into the hands of people so that such tragedies are not repeated.

- Dick Betts

Letters



Mental Patients
Liberation Project
116 N. Carolina Ave. SE,
Wash., D.C. 20003

September 3, 1972

Ms. Kathy Carney:

Dear Kathy,

Could you thank the person who sent me a copy of the July MPA Newsletter? I'm very glad to have it and I plan to take it to our group's next meeting. Would like to receive it regularly--will the dollar enclosed defray the expense for a time?

You seem to be much further along than we are. Our group meets once a month in a Methodist Church. Usually about 8 people come. About 40 in the Wash. area have expressed interest. Some are afraid to come out at night because of Washington's crime. We've only been organized since April of this year and so far our only activity has been the monthly meeting.

How did you all get started and what does MPA stand for?

Sincerely,

Suzanne
(Mrs. Suzanne T. Cooper)

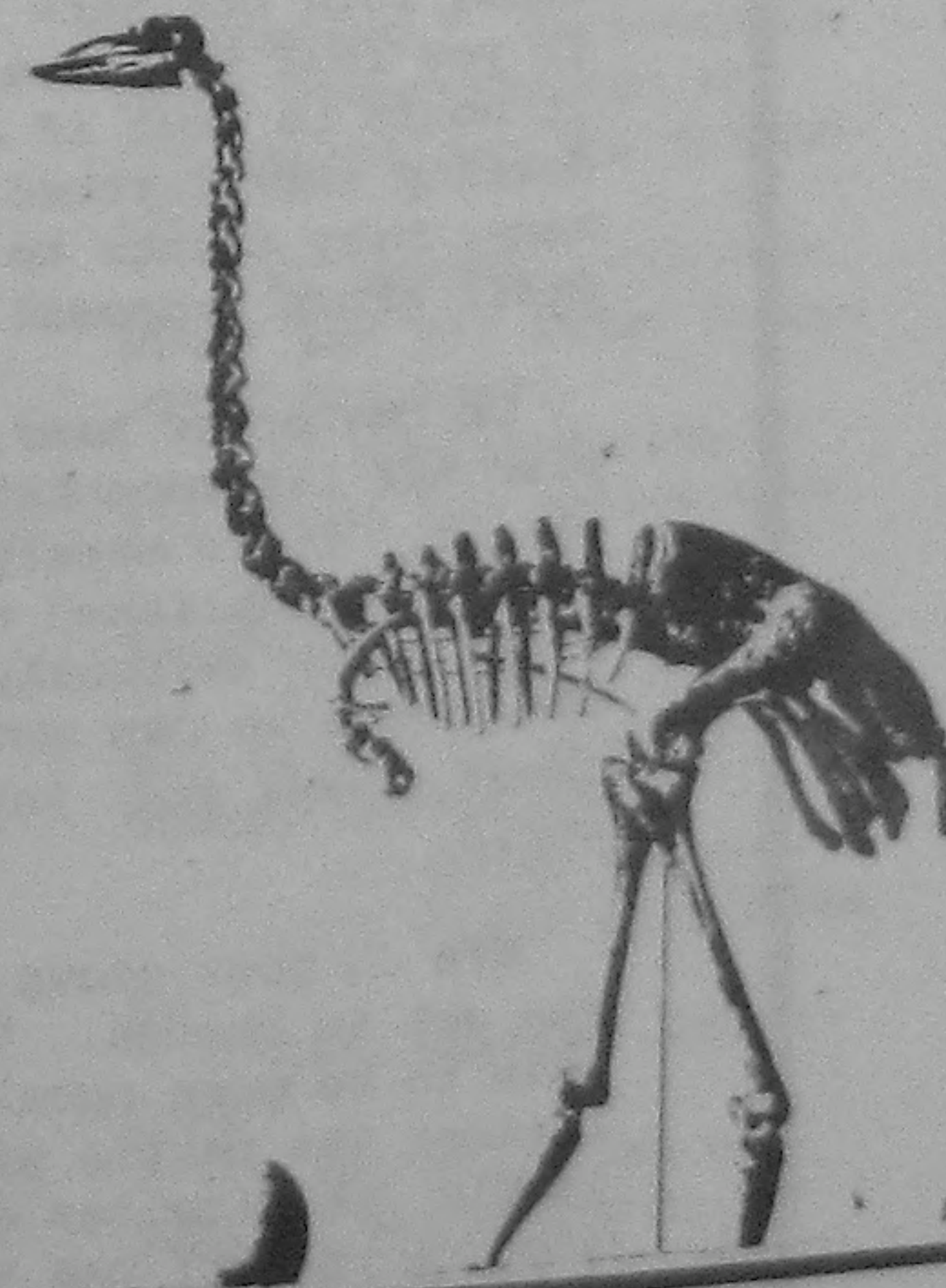
Dear MPA,

The paper looks really good. We're glad that you found use for the Psych Sheet. Always feel free to use our material, as we will with yours. Keep up the struggle.

Phil Brown
Rough Times
P.O. Box 89
W. Somerville, Mass.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I'd like to thank whoever sent me the July issue of In a Nutshell, it was a real up to read. First, because it's such a together publication and helps me to hope that we really can get the energy together to make a human world. Second, because it so obviously didn't have a single line that everybody had to toe to get printed; the variety of the letters and articles (the one on Super-Planner was really a trip; I enjoyed Cathy's letter very much.) (cont. p. 13, see "letters")



PAID POLITICAL ANNOUNCEMENT

By the time this article is published, the Provincial elections will be history and the new government will be planning the Fall sessions of the Legislature. There are four major issues of importance to the general public, namely:

- Foreign Ownership
- Ecology
- Labour Troubles
- Rising Food and Housing Costs

Here is my view on how to solve these problems: The solution to foreign ownership is to issue Canadian citizenship papers to everyone. On the subject of ecology, everyone should stop breathing for a period of one week, thereby allowing the atmosphere to accumulate oxygen. Also, we could issue shotguns to all birds, thereby cutting down on the number of hunters. With the oil tanker problem, we could disguise the Gulf Islands to look like South Sea Islands (palm trees, hula girls, etc.) and in that way so confuse the oil tanker captains that they will head North to Alaska to dump their oil. On the labour trouble situation, the solution is simple... "switch positions"! Let the unions run the companies and the company personnel work as labourers. On the rising cost of food and housing, let's all emigrate to Mexico where housing and food costs are cheaper. Here's hoping that the new Legislature will adopt these simple solutions.

-Sir Figby Short

THE WAR BETWEEN PEOPLE PEOPLE (cont. from p. 3)

personal problems, relationships etc. The group members would make commitments to each other to have their lives inter-linked on a daily basis, to be in regular contact with one another and to help each other with any problems, whether personal or practical. The idea is for the people in each group to become close, dependable friends.

Secondly, each group would also function as a business group. It is more difficult to set out how this part works. Perhaps we should divide MPA into a number of work areas, for example: crafts, office, public relations, housing, finances, maintenance, crisis volunteer program, communications etc. etc. Each ten person group, including coordinator and members, would be responsible for one or two areas. Thus the coordinators would work closely with the members in carrying out the tasks in that area and also would be close to the members through the encounter groups and the relationships that will develop through the common involvement in both areas.

The next step would entail figuring out how all the small groups would be inter-connected. But that is getting ahead of ourselves. At this point, feedback on the ideas laid out here would be appreciated. If you feel the ideas have some validity, it would be good if everyone would try to develop them further. There are obviously many, many things to be worked out if the small group proposal is to prove functional.

On the other hand, if you feel that this plan has insurmountable difficulties, please say so. It is merely an idea, not a previously established structure. If everyone would think seriously about restructuring MPA, maybe we can combine all of the plans, ideas, needs etc. into a truly egalitarian whole.

MPA is your group. Help change it. It has got to change. Power and responsibility have to be more equally distributed. The war between the people people and the business people (the feelies and the wheelies, as someone put it) has got to be resolved.

NDF CANDIDATES PRESENTED WITH MPA DEMANDS

At Politics Night on August 17th, three NDP candidates--Rosemary Brown, Phyllis Young and Roy Cummings--were presented with the following handout containing six demands which we asked them to support if they were elected. (And fortunately they all were.)

The handout read:

A Few Statistics

-Almost 70% of admissions to Riverview are re-admissions.

-Over 60% of admissions to Riverview are involuntary.

-Fifty percent of patients who commit suicide do so within three months of discharge from hospital.

These statistics, coupled with the experience of anyone who has been hospitalized, leave no doubt that the Social Credit Government has a policy of treating mental patients like human garbage. This policy is in dire need of change.

Demands

We, a group of patients within the Mental Patients Association, demand the following changes:

- 1) The immediate initiation of a program
 - a) to abolish large, centralized mental institutions such as Riverview; and
 - b) to replace them with neighbourhood, user-controlled residences, drop-in centers and crisis centers.

2) The progressive de-medicalization and de-professionalization of the mental health field. Relatedly, we demand government support of programs based on the premise that emotional misery is a social, political and economic problem, not a medical one.

3) That a Review Panel be established to study the Mental Health Act and the Patients Estate Act with the objective of repealing both; and short of this goal, that the Acts be revised to comply with Number 4, below.

4) That mental patients be accorded full civil and judicial rights under law, equal to those accorded all citizens.

Specifically, that all psychiatric interventions and treatments be administered only on a voluntary basis involving the full and informed consent of both "patient" and "therapist." Included in these interventions and treatments are the following:

- a) admission to hospital and all other therapeutic programs.
- b) administering of all drugs and medications.
- c) administering of electro-convulsive therapy.
- d) participation in all facets of therapy programs, including:
 - i) group therapy
 - ii) individual therapy
 - iii) program activities
 - iv) all forms of labour, which are to be remunerated at a rate equal to or exceeding the

minimum rate set forth in the Civil Service Act for such work.

5) The unconditional abolition of all forms of psychosurgery.

6) That at each mental health facility, democratically elected, patient-composed Appeal and Grievance Committees be established and empowered to consider and render binding decisions upon requests, complaints and appeals made by patients in that facility.

* * * * *

As a footnote, it should be added that Demands 3 and 4 should be revised to comply with the new Act being prepared by the research committee. Their Act does allow for involuntary commitments in cases where a five-person Admissions Board has held a thorough hearing and has determined that the person presents an imminent physical danger to himself or others. It does not, however, allow for any other involuntary treatments beyond admission.

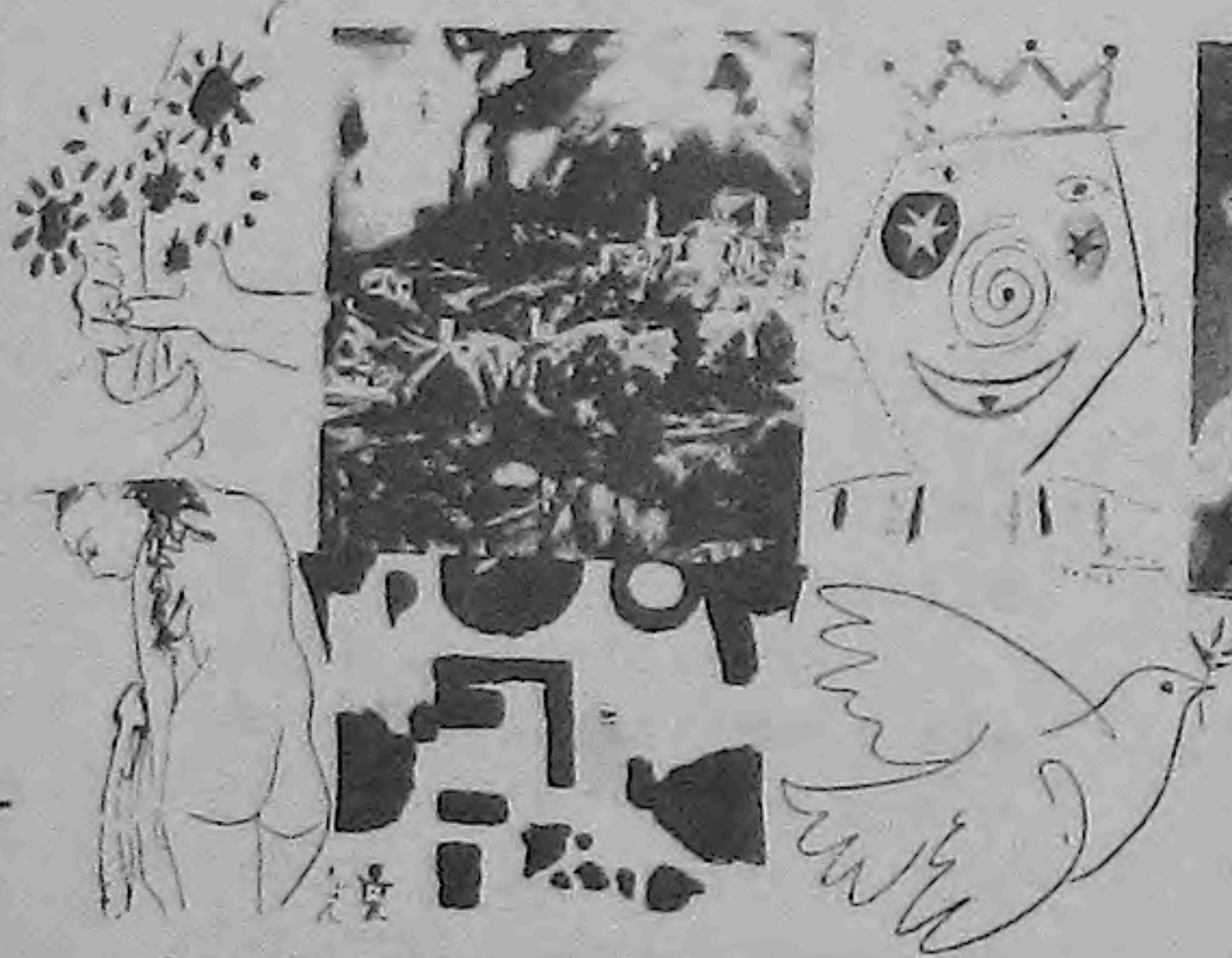


Drawings by Hillary Phillips

Impressions of a Mental Institution

I sat on the bench watching the continuous flow of people. They were not people. They were monsters with grotesque mouths slashed across their faces, with eyes bulging, blood-shot and full of horror. Their shuffling, disjointed walking showed disgust and degradation.

Somehow I had lost track of time. How long had I been here? My head



was hot and the pressure was so intense that I could feel my teeth pressing against my gums in an effort to escape the prison of my skull. I was turning into a black panther and my eyes were full of the thought of death.

The sun was very hot. There were trees, big trees, lifeless yet pounding with green terror. They were living beings trying to impose themselves on my vision. I must beware of them.

The flowers, bright pools of blood cushioned in a sea of green, swept over my consciousness. I was filled with the desire to explode and unite with the brilliant flashes of colour and

flowers and agony. Each yellow, each blue, each mauve, every hue cried out to be noticed. Each one was painfully sharp, like a knife piercing my flesh.

Then it was clear.

The lawn swept through rolling hills of soothing green, well watered and well tended by the men toiling under the guise of work therapy. I could see their institutional

baggy brown or grey trousers, checked red and green lumber shirts and straw hats pulled down over their ears. They were slight, anonymous men standing in rows and progressing mutely across the lawn, slowly raking debris and loose grass into piles and then bundling it up in wagons to be wheeled away.

Only the quietly bizarre and quietly depressive roamed the grounds. Let us not disturb the public.

I sat on the bench at this home for the homeless. People came and went, all ages, but surely united by misery for here

the automatic smile was a mark of shame.

The chronics passed well satisfied in this outcast society, where they are not outcast, secure in a hierarchy of their own, constructed out of their helplessness, built on the gossip and camaraderie of the mad and the lonely. The goodness and tolerance of their fellows, which is unfortunately rare on the "out-

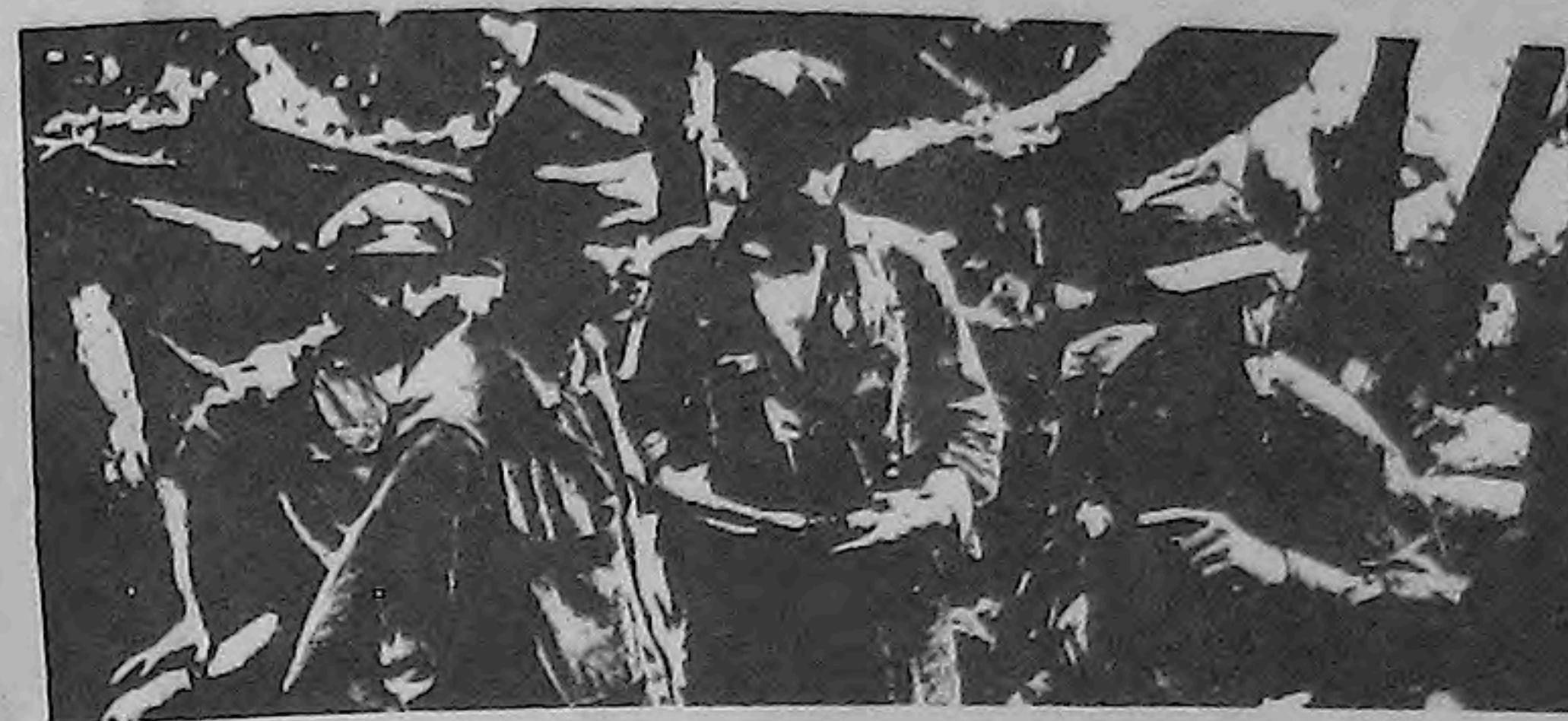
side", was their cushion from the world. Here was some kindness and acceptance.

The only beauty was the flowers and the trees. Magnolia were cupped in a pinky-white heaven and daffodils were snappy yellow, perky and bursting with morning. Battles of red flowers marched in circle formations livid with exquisite scarlet surrounded by other regiments of polite sunshine petals. And everywhere were the soft weave of the willow trees and the whispers of towering dictatorial oaks.

These gifts were created and nourished by the patients. Somewhere there is a sense of beauty waiting to give birth.

- Petra Graves

POLITICS (people) NIGHT



Politics night has been going on for a couple of months at MPA. Its purpose was just to get together to discuss "political things" or things which affected our lives in a broader sense than personal difficulties or hang-ups.

For example, an involuntary commitment is a political act on the part of the people doing the committing and certainly has personal consequences for whoever is being committed. We wanted to discuss the basis of such acts to make them more understandable and to get a picture of how the economic, political and social system operates in back of all this.

OK. We've made a number of starts. We began just discussing whatever came to mind. Free associations became scarcer so we laid out a program which many of you have probably seen. The program intended to deal with areas such as "The History of 'Insanity,'" "Social Causes of Mental Illness," etc.

Then it happened! The NDP was elected and the possibilities for change became more real to us. The program, it was decided, should be shelved for the time being and we should try to direct our thoughts to ways of effecting changes in the existing mental health system. (See the front page article for some of the things we've been discussing.)

With the Research Committee's report almost completed we have plenty of work to do in the practical political sphere. And, and in the light of recent developments in Victoria, we need as many people

as possible to help formulate strategies for MPA in the future.

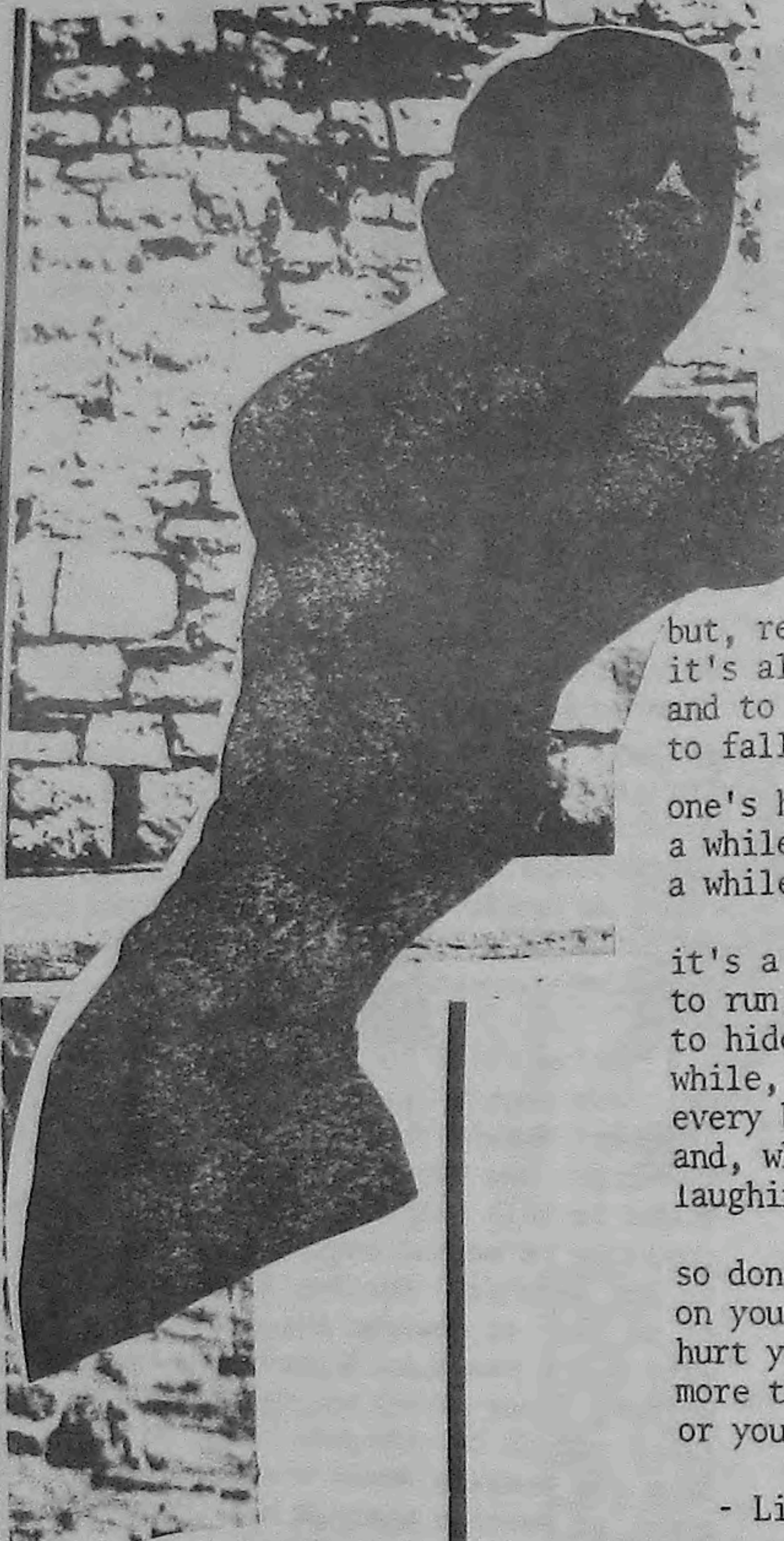
All this sounds serious and somber, which it is, but we've found it doesn't have to be approached in a dry, impersonal way. Our politics come from our experience in the world and the politics of experience is anything but dull. The discussions have been consistently lively and challenging and many people have contributed to making politics night the relative success it has been.

We've tried to inject variety into politics night. Before the election Rosemary Brown, Phyllis Young and Roy Cummings (now NDP MLA's) came down one night to talk with us about their party's position on mental health and to listen to our demands. Another time, about 15 of us went to Pearson Hospital to visit with Alice Stark to discuss her very important ideas about how mental institutions should be changed. Jean Rands from the Working Women's Association spent an evening with us talking about the work her group is doing.

For the next few weeks we'll be bringing in speakers from various community groups to find out what other organizations are up to. There will be speakers from ecology groups, trade unions, gay liberation, etc. If you want to find out what's going on each week, or if you have ideas about speakers or topics, call Len Lorimer at the drop-in center (738-5177).

We've had some organizational prob-

(cont. p. 14, see "Politics")



a lot of fun

it's a lot of fun
to sit
and look
a while, to
see one's self
as another
dreaming

but, really
it's also easy to fall
and to rise, too easy
to fall; to hit
one's head, to sit
a while, and moan
a while

it's a lot of fun
to run, and
to hide, a
while, when
every body's playing
and, when no one's
laughing at you

so don't slam the door
on your hand, it'll
hurt your pride
more than your hand
or your mind

- Lid Strand

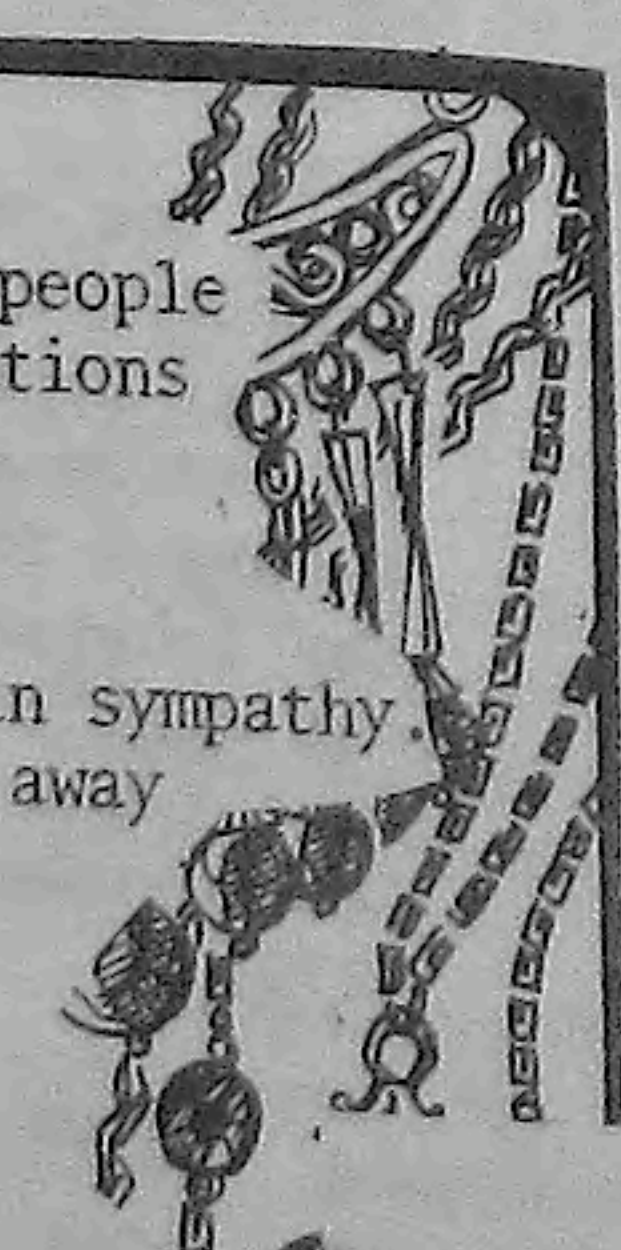
I Read for the Blind

There are very ordinary people
Who suffer great deprivations
Of the heart and soul
Without a murmur.

Let me hold their ears in sympathy.
Let me lift their minds away
To other things.

I read for the blind
And my tongue
Eases out the words
In tenderness.

-Molly Dexall



Someone should write a western plot
Where first the heroine gets shot
The bank jumps on a horse & rides
Persuing alcoholic guides
The stagecoach drivers go on strike
The cowboys all refuse to fight
The hero with no motivation
Relieves himself by masturbation
Then as the film approaches climax,
With the soundtrack roaring and crashing
A band of Indians charge the screen
And ride over the audience--laughing.

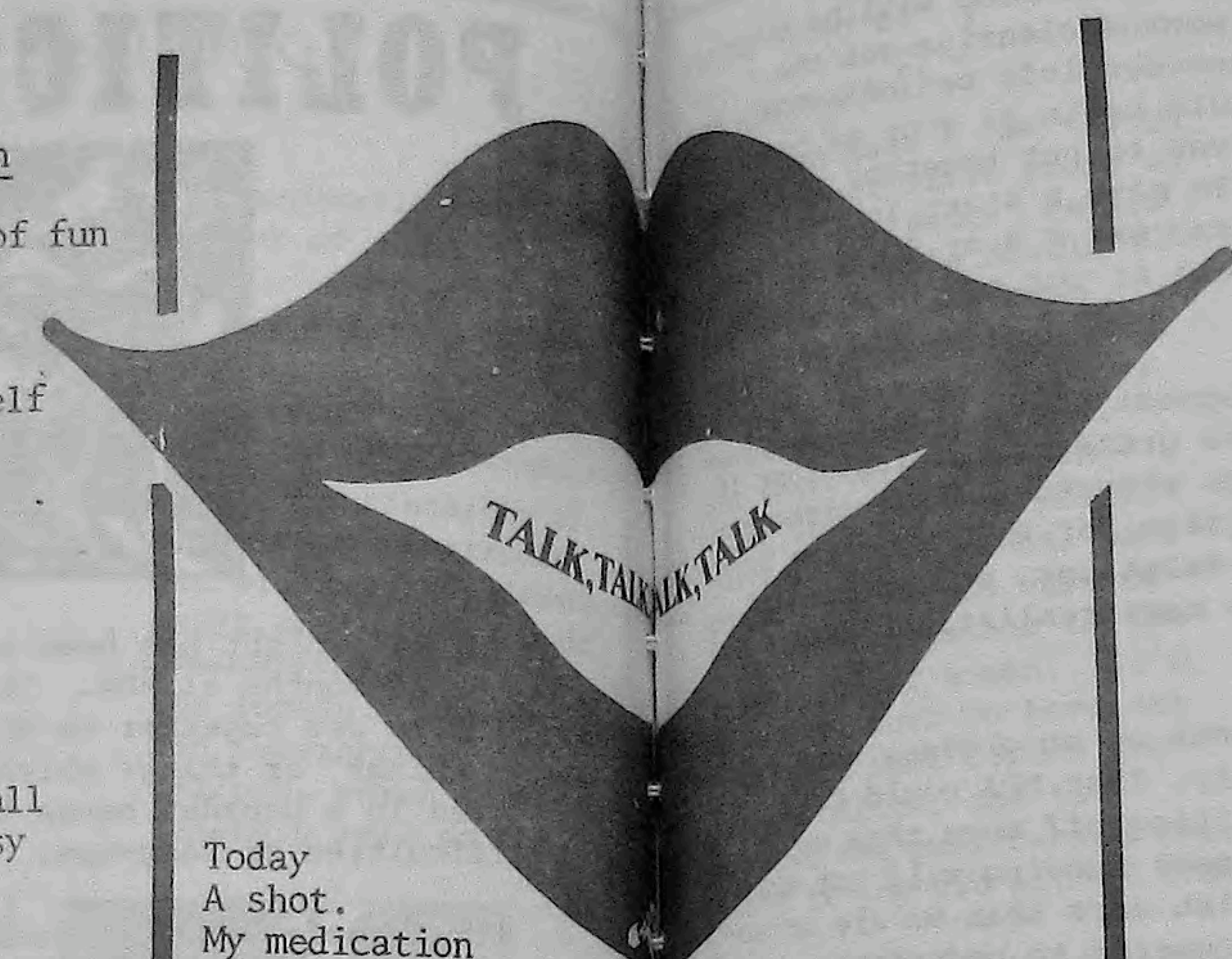
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IDEAL HORSEOPERA

Today
A shot.
My medication
as you say.
Just another not-thing--
I seem calm.

If I could show you
What's behind the walls
if I could rip them out
if I could suck you in
if I could blow your mind
as mine is blown.

- Peggy Berkowitz



POEMS FOR JOHN

being with you
is like walking
always on shifting sand

being without you
is like walking
always on stone.

Our bodies cast pear-shaped shadows
that will grow closer, towards evening
until we can pass each from our own
into the other's, forming new postures
for each shifting of the branches
above

why should I sometimes imagine that
I fill a mould you formed long ago;
the limbs that would have been excesses
have folded into my skin
like petals

- Elaine Bougie

PSYCHIATRIST

Beneath my feet as I was suspended
ran circles of angry dogs. Snapping
at my heels barking, screaming and hungry for
my flesh.

Why yes I do feel that nobody cares
or understands. How can they when I don't
feel nor understand myself.

Worry sprouts on the short of my
conscious mind like dark black petals, they
fall heavily on the pattern of my dreams.

Over and beyond the sense of brightness the
cool hand of death clasps me close to its
bosom. And the black retch of failure
blooms on my mind.

The psychiatrist sat in his low slung chair.
While I perched in front feeling terrible
awkward and insecure, like on display.

He stared at me while I blushed and the
silence hung heavy on the air.

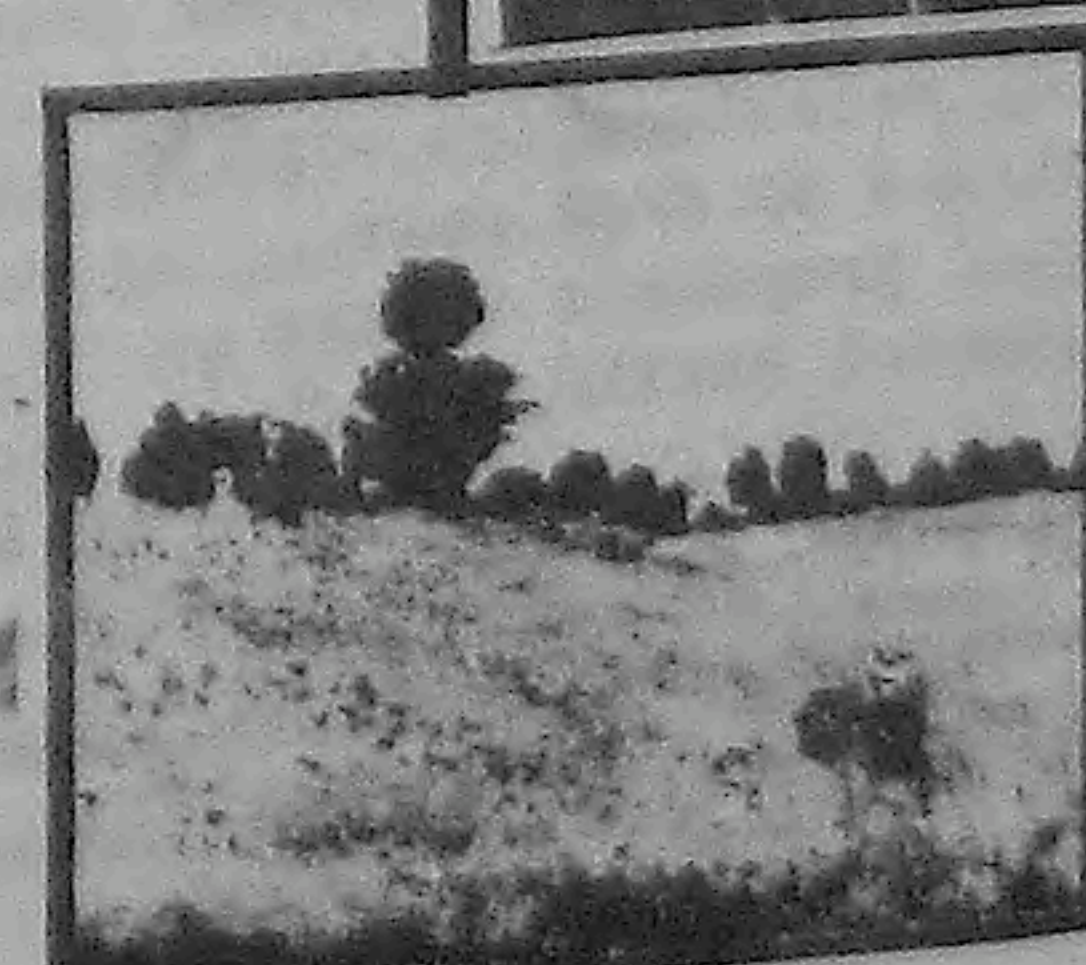
He smoked a pipe. He was very languid
and lazily unconcerned.
While I....no matter.

Suddenly - well he had such
sexy eyes - It came to me at least
that it was so.

What else then, could a girl think
of, really my blush rose and covered
my body.

Well really for an hour I couldn't
speak for my thoughts.

- Petra Graves



(cont. from p. 2)

THE FUTURE: WHAT WILL OUR ROLE BE?

We began with the question of how MPA can work with the government to contribute to improving the dismal mental health system in B.C. Obviously, the answers to this question will have to be worked out in the months and years ahead. At this point we can only sketch out the more general approaches we might take.

No one really expected the NDP to form such a strong majority government, so most of our previous plans were designed with the thought of having an unsympathetic government to contend with. Now we have to begin re-thinking all of our strategies.

The research committee, for example, which has just completed a 100 page brief recommending changes in the Mental Health Act, was about to initiate a campaign of public education on the issues raised in the brief. We felt this course would be more fruitful than approaching a deaf legislature to change the Act. Now, however, there is a real chance that the brief can have an impact on legislative change and the feeling is that this is where we should apply our energies.

And not just on legal issues, but in the whole mental health area, we must begin formulating policies and making recommendations which are feasible. Beforehand, it was easy to voice demands when we knew they had almost no chance of being implemented. Now our demands must take into account the change in government and thus conform to a level of reality such that they can be acted upon.

It's important to bear in mind that the government will be looking to groups like MPA to participate in re-shaping and humanizing the programs botched up by the Socreds. We must take the initiative to make concrete proposals rather than simply reacting to government actions. Of course, this should not mean that we work in isolation; we must develop relationships with government representatives so that once we have made our initial proposals we can collaborate with the Mental Health Branch and other departments in jointly formulating a course of action.

Because the government will be busy for several months clearing out the ghosts and cobwebs left behind by Bennett, we should begin as soon as possible among ourselves to put together program proposals. To make a start in this direction, we suggest a 4 or 5 day conference to be held at our new farm in mid-October.

We also suggest that, at the outset, we indulge the grandiose fantasy that it is up to us to structure the entire mental health system for B.C. Once we have pooled these delusions, we can descend as a group to more realistic levels of planning.

This brings up an obvious note of caution, namely, that MPA could fall into the trap of biting off more than we can chew. Government funding will not enable us to accomplish more than we are organizationally prepared to undertake. Funding is a necessary but not sufficient condition for moving ahead. It is up to us to ensure that we set our goals rather than let them be set by enticing offers of government support. In a word, we must counterbalance our delusions of grandeur with equally valid delusions of mediocrity.

A FEW SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS

But just because there are obvious limits to what MPA can implement does not mean that we cannot make recommendations for other groups and agencies to undertake. MPA, as a group, ought to press for creation of and representation on government committees geared toward reviewing and establishing policies in the entire sphere of mental health.

In the area of daycare, for example, it is well known that many, many women suffer emotional breakdowns largely because they have no help with their kids. While MPA may not be organizationally ready to set up daycare centers, we ought to be involved in ensuring that child care provisions are made an integral part of provincial mental health programs.

As we know from our own experience, the area of crisis services is another one that desperately needs strengthening.

(cont. p. 14, see "NDP")

LETTERS (CONT'D)

(cont. from p. 5)

much, and have a few things to say about Alice Stark's; I liked Dick Betts' review of Laing; Ursula Honold's editorial; it all came beautifully together! but who, by the way, is Lanny Beckman?) was far out. You dealt with so much, from "insanity" to political aspects of mental patienthood to people ways of getting it together to the oppression of women....I'd like very much to have any available back copies for LAMP's office, and to receive the publication regularly if you can afford that.

Just about Alice Stark's letter, I'd like to say that there are varieties of ways of demystifying the myth of mental illness, and the idea of a mental patient doesn't necessarily imply mental illness is a real thing. For example, I chose the above title for LAMP to emphasize the idea of the mental patient as occupying a social status or role, rather than being mentally ill or having a mental illness. On the other hand I think it's really important to find ways of bringing all pressured/oppressed people together, so maybe in that sense your "mental pressure association" idea has some good potential.

I can't really get all this into a letter, I guess I've just been depressed about the state of our current organization (a lot of the MP groups are just beginning to form; there's lots of conflict/division over the various concerns, such as

(1) political/legal activism,

public education etc.; (2) getting personal heads together, the encounter-type idea (much the way the women's movement got under way); and (3) the development of support services, voluntary homes/refuge centers, etc., which MPA seems to have made a good beginning toward resolving). If I could make another suggestion based on a thought from another part of the NUTSHELL, I'd like to say that none of these articles are antithetical, contradictory, mutually inconsistent, or any other bad names. Wherever people try to become and help each other to be persons (in the Laing sense) in contemporary society, then revolution and life are going on.

By the way, PEOPLE DON'T OWN PEOPLE is a fantastic slogan, which brings together an incredible amount of the problem into a few words.

I'd like to figure out as much as I can about the successes you've had; not that all problems are solved, I know, but it does seem that really good beginnings/roots are developing up there, and I'd like to figure out to what extent and how some of your good happenings might be transplanted here. How old is MPA? Is Canadian mental hospitalization, the Canadian situation etc. somehow not quite as bad as the American? (Ed. Note: It is quite as bad.)

I noticed the grants mentioned on the back page of NUTSHELL and so far as I know, nothing comparable has happened to any other MP group. (Ed. Note: It is much easier to get grants in Canada.) Is there someone/are there someones who'd be willing to correspond with U.S. MP groups on such topics, or

would you be willing to get information together that I could pass on to U.S. groups? Is NUTSHELL currently going to U.S. MP groups (I think it'd be good input)? Have you sent a copy to the other research/legal group listed in Rough Times, Dave Ferleger's Mental Patient Civil Liberties Project (if not I know he'd dig a copy, 121 South 18th St., Phil, PA. 19103)? I wish you all were closer. There was a brief attempt to get an MP group together in Berkeley, which I think will rise again but has temporarily folded; and in general there aren't too many people within reach here with whom to share energy, ideas, etc. I'm enclosing a copy of a resource sheet, for those who might like to use it; and of a U.S. newspaper article I thought you might be interested in. I'm also enclosing a piece that can serve as a sample of what I'm trying to do with LAMP. A developing issue here is the "right to treat me..." business (do you have back issues of RT to refer to for things like the Wyatt Report?) and one of the things I'm trying to do is call attention to the dangerous aspects of this issue. I guess you might say my activities in this field are almost entirely political, in general I might complain of too little personal life, sunshine, rest, sleep, exercise, music, etc.; I'm under pressure to try to get LAMP funded before I have to give it up for some other form of work when my present meager support bread runs out. I guess I'll also enclose my latest spare copy of an article on (cont. p. 17, see "Letters")

(cont. from p. 12)
NDP -- BETTER DAYS FOR US!

Crisis work is messy and expensive--two of the reasons no effective programs are in operation. Yet if such programs did exist, if genuine help (not in a hospital emergency ward or on a telephone) were available in the early stages of crisis, how many people would be saved from the downward spiral that eventually results in even costlier hospitalization? Again, MPA cannot begin to meet the crisis needs of the province, but we can participate in establishing policies which will.

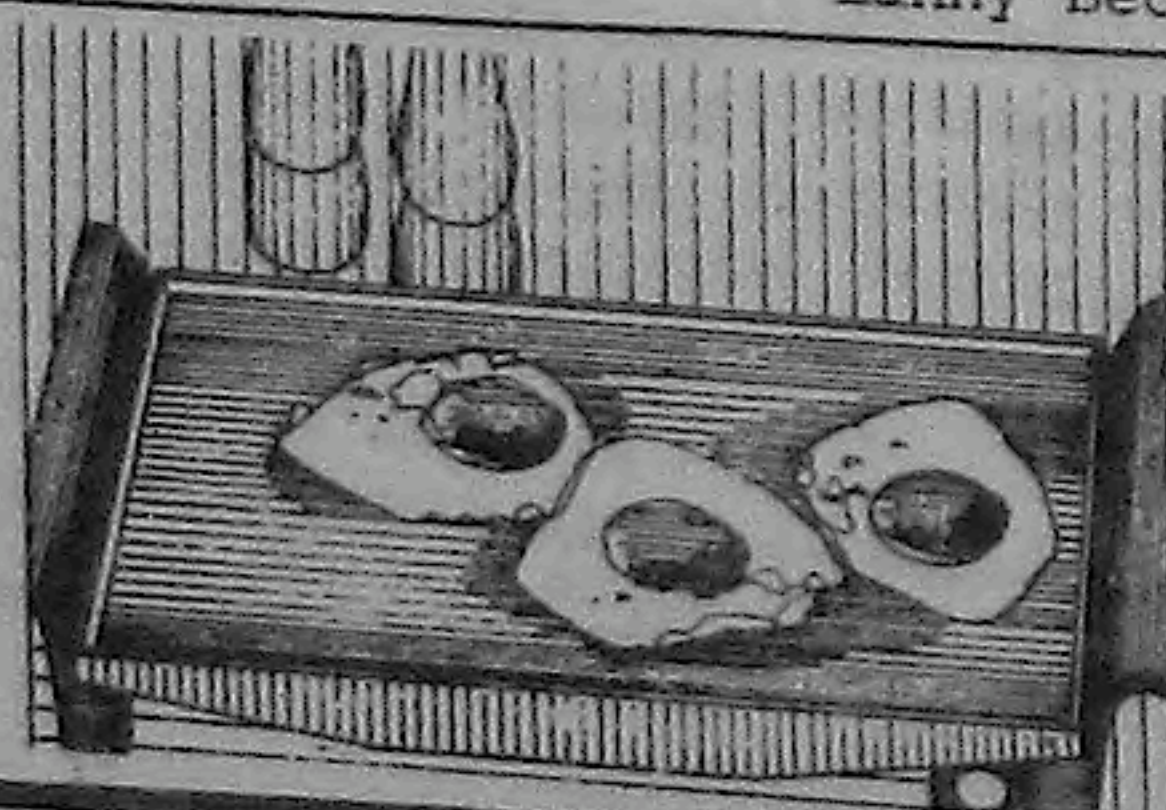
Child care and crisis services are only two of many issues which require urgent and thoughtful consideration. Others are: aftercare, employment discrimination, public education, community intergration, patient-participation, de-professionalization, legal aid programs etc. etc. We should be discussing all of these topics and others, with the goal of devising feasible and effective programs for people who are being driven crazy by the inhuman conditions of life in B.C.

NOW THE WORK BEGINS

The point I most want to make is that we in MPA must begin to think not only of improving the lives of our 200 more-or-less active members, but also of proposing ideas which will help the thousands of in-patients and the tens of thousands of out-patients, ex-patients and others being driven quietly mad in this province.

The NDP victory makes these goals infinitely more possible than they were under Social Credit. Now that the jubilation over the election is dying down, it is time for us to get down to the hard work of participating with government in designing programs which will meaningfully attack the sources and symptoms of human misery.

- Lanny Beckman



POLITICS NIGHT (cont. from p. 9)

lems like getting things xeroxed and keeping up a continuity of discussion about what we should plan for in the future. The above-mentioned ill-fated program--remember, "History..." "Social Causes..."

hasn't been totally scrapped. In the winter months when the snow in on the ground and our leaky boots won't allow us to do much moving around, I have visions of us, in our heavy socks and sweaters, sitting around the fire with the lights down low, reading together and discussing these things. In my fantasy, there is also popcorn and marshmallows. And hot dogs.

In the meantime there are lots of things to talk about and to plan, and politics night has become pivotal in these matters. We hope it continues and broadens with more taking part. It happens every Thursday night at 8 at the drop-in center. Join us.



1754 WEST 11th IS OURS

MORTGAGE APPROVED!

Don't look now but MPA might have a permanent home.

After 10 months of trying to buy a house we've finally succeeded. The Ottawa office of Central Mortgage and Housing has just approved our application for a mortgage at 1754 West 11th.

Before we can move in there is a bit of red tape to go through at City Hall. Be that as it may we hope to move in by December.

reports

RESEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT

The Research Committee has finished writing a new Mental Health Act and we have almost completed a brief that explains the changes we have made and describes most of the information we have discovered in the last three months.

One of the major changes we propose is a change in the definition of "mental illness". We are not happy to have to write medical-legal definitions for these social situations, but the problem with writing true social definitions is that they make the categories too broad, i.e., if we wrote an honest and realistic definition of "mental illness" almost everybody could be locked up in Riverview.

The definition now in use for deciding who can be put in Riverview against their will is that the person needs to be put away either for her/his "own protection or welfare" or because she/he would "benefit from treatment". This means just about anyone who is acting "strangely". The definition we propose is one that says only persons who present an "imminent danger of substantial personal injury" to others and they have already "threatened, attempted, or inflicted physical harm" on another person.

Another major change we propose is the setting up of a full-time, in-hospital



legal aid service, consisting of alwyers appointed by and responsible to the legislature whose job is to tell all the people in the hospital their rights and help them get reviews and discharge. Also we suggest that a Grievance Committee be set up of patients and lower level workers--aides, cleaners, some nurses--to work with the Legal Aid Committee and also to deal with problems that arise in the daily routine. Hospital records are to be open to both these committees.

We have also written an extensive section on rights of persons in hospitals. Briefly, these are as follows:

1. The Mental Health Act must be explained to everyone in the hospital.

2. Notice of committment and of rights must be given to anyone designated by the person committed or her/his lawyer.
3. Everyone in the hospital has the following rights:
 - a) wear own clothes, keep own possessions and money
 - b) have lockable storage space
 - c) see visitors freely.
 - d) be able to make and receive confidential calls and letters.
 - e) to refuse drug treatment, shock therapy, and lobotomy.
 - f) to have access to information about all possible therapy methods and to be able to discuss these freely.
 - g) to have a choice of physician or other professional services
 - h) to have a choice of facilities
 - i) to have access to the Legal Aid Service
 - j) to register and vote in elections.
 - k) upon discharge to be given suitable clothing and money to defray expenses until a person can get to relatives or find a job.

(cont. next page, see "Research")

RESEARCH (cont. from p. 15)

- l) to have independent medical opinion.
- m) to be notified of all facilities in the institution.
- n) to order books for the library.
- o) to continue education and/or job-training courses, if desired.
- p) to refuse to work or to work if desired but to be paid regular wages for work done.
- q) to have driver's licence returned on discharge.
- r) to have case reviewed 14 days after admission, at a subsequent period of 8 weeks, and then every 6 months after that.

These are only some of the changes we have come up with. We will be making copies of both the revised Act and the brief and they will be around MPA soon. We also hope to get a leaflet or booklet together with a lot of information we have available. This will hopefully be a start towards educating the general public about what it means to be committed to a mental hospital.



FARM REPORT - SEPTEMBER

The MPA Farm has a new address: 26942 - 108 Ave. Whonnock
This is 10 miles E. of Haney.

The house has 5 bedrooms, livingroom, diningroom, large kitchen (2 stoves, 2 fridges) bathroom, pantry, and sunporch, also a full basement.

There is a small cottage alongside the house that will be used for a dorm. The out buildings are in good condition, especially the chicken house. This is important as we plan to have 100 laying hens plus 100 chicks. The barn and adjoining shed are nearer the main house. This means no long treks through the snow to feed and water livestock in the winter. Besides these facilities there are 10 acres cleared (for grazing cows), plus we have access to another 30 acres of woods and trails for walks, hikes, picnics and whatever. In the front yard are 8 fruit trees-- plum, apple, and pear, the fruit is ripe now and ready for canning.

People living at this farm can go to Haney for shopping, shows, doctors, etc., the bus stops 1/4 mi. from the farm and makes a return trip twice a day. One of the drawbacks of the Matsqui farm was the isolation and having to depend on someone for a ride to town. This farm is all that it sounds like, with the fact--you only get what you pay for--rent is \$250/mo. Of course sharing expenses with other residents won't



make it too costly for any one person (about \$65/mo.) To begin with, the farm house was not liveable. I didn't feel this was good enough for an MPA farm. Consequently, I have been re-decorating, moving, cutting grass, raking the garden at our old farm and settling people in the new house. Generally, I've gone to a lot of work to create the type of place people can take pride in and care about.

Living at the farm now is a young mother with 2 children. For the future we plan to add 4 more people and gradually 8, making a total of 12 altogether. The programme I outlined will be the same as in the last newsletter. Now most of the hassels of the past 2 months are cleared away and it is possible to concentrate efforts on the needs of people willing to move in and make a commitment and a fresh start in a farm community.

I want to thank the people from Fran's house who came out to give a hand last week. Thanks you guys! Also, thank you to Peter Stinson, a local minister, who has been really supportive and helpful with our farm.

Anyone interested in seeing the new farm is welcome to visit. Let me know first--phone me at 462-7232 (at home). The farm phone hasn't been installed yet.

Ya all come now,

- Mike Musclow

P.S. Don't worry about it--do it!

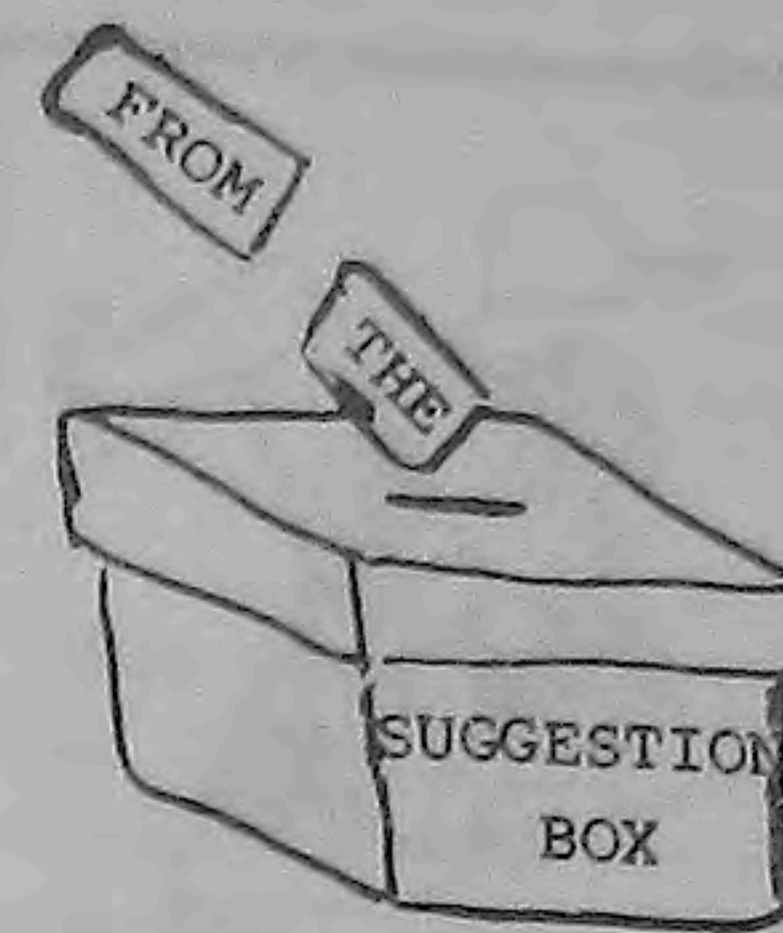
LETTERS (cont. from P. 13)
a patient refusing electro-shock therapy successfully, since I want to send you the newspaper clipping that prompted it. Do you have any ideas/info on whether these things relate at all to the Canadian situation? Do you know of any other groups in Canada? Are you doing anything along legal lines?

Feel free to use any of these articles, resources, or this letter or parts thereof in the *Nutshell* if you like, but more immediately, please pass this stuff around to other people at MPA, I'm sorry I haven't the resources to send a bunch; and I especially want to thank those people whose stuff in *Nutshell* made me feel so good. I'd like to hear from any of you; and please let me know if you'd like to receive more stuff like the things enclosed (in which case a small, I mean small, contribution would be nice, just to cover costs of xeroxing, etc.). I'm looking for ways to establish more communication among MP groups; like, I think *Nutshell* would be a good source of positive energy to send around; and that goes for other things. Any ideas? Keep up the good work, best of luck and

Love in struggle,

- Bob Roth

Center for the Study of Legal Authority and Mental Patient Status (LAMP).
2014 Channing Way
Berkeley, Ca. 94704



People in hospital should not have their mental health judged by how co-operative they are with the hospital. For instance it should be made very clear that they are not going to get out faster by washing toilet bowls.

Some provision should be made for someone to look after what the patient has left behind when he goes into hospital and some arrangements should be made to get his clothes and necessities to him.



Most people who are discharged from hospital spend most of their time at home because they're still afraid of going out and because they don't have much money for bus fare. (Most are on welfare.) It would be a big help if every person discharged from a mental hospital was given a six-month bus pass to encourage him or her to get out and mix with people. Maybe even find a job.

NEWSLETTER QUOTES

Thou shalt not answer questionnaires
Or quizzes upon World Affairs
Not with compliance
Take any test. Thou shalt not sit
With statisticians, nor commit
A Social Science

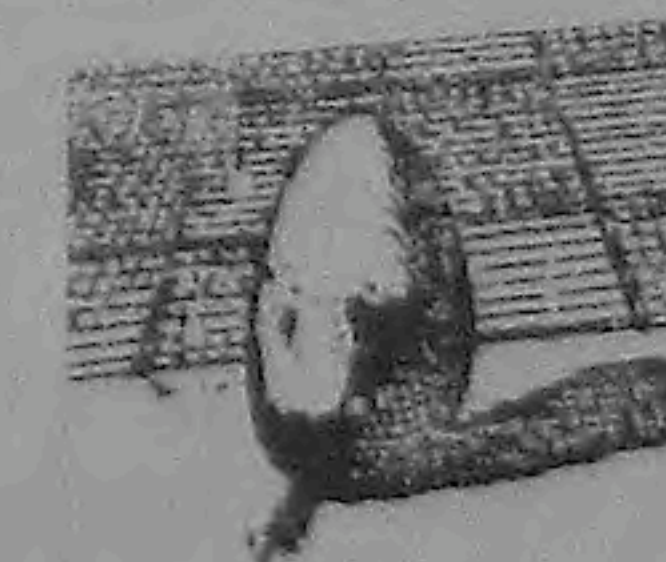
- W.H. Auden, *Under Which Lyre--A Revolutionary Tract for the Times*.

The stairway of time is ever echoing with the wooden shoe going up, the polished boot descending.

- Jack London

You homosexuals better be careful or society will castrate you so you can't reproduce your own kind.

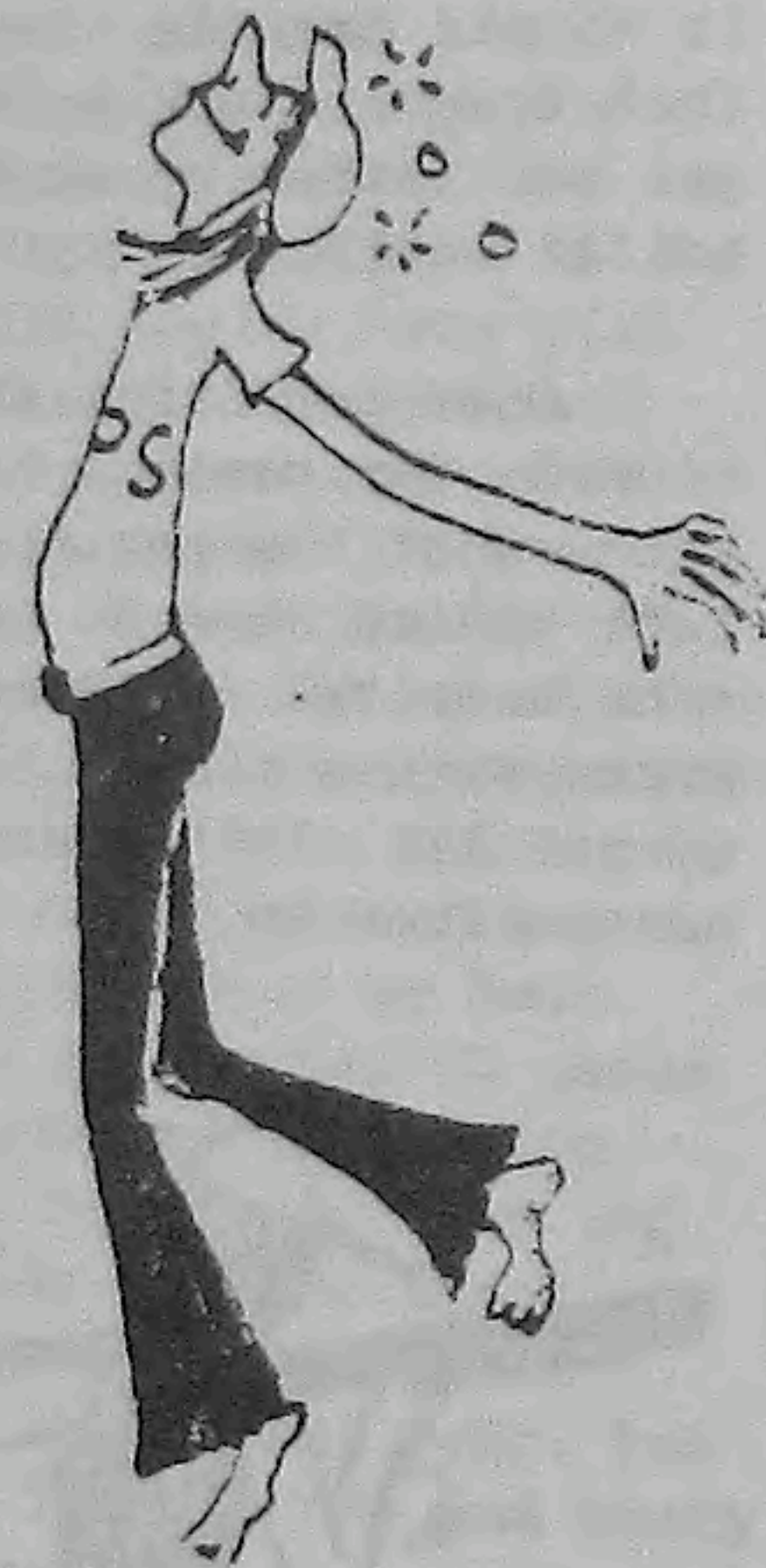
-Former Socred MLA Burt Price to a Gay Liberation Spokesman at an All-Candidates Meeting
Aug. 23/72



Report from the Far East

The fast house has the most sensitive bunch of machines collected under one roof. Sensitivity is the overall problem. However there is a certain contagion which associates itself with any behavior. In the case of our machines it all started with the death throes of the refrigerator. Gasping on its last drop of freon, it fought back gamely by attempting to electrocute anyone who touched the stove while opening its door. Eatons charged us ten dollars to tell us there was no hope. But we all knew it was a case of aggressive, paranoid syndrome with sadistic manifestations -- a terminal case. We gave it a decent burial.

Then the washing machine started showing repetitive behavior, failing to change cycles. Anger episodes became frequent and finally it broke into a pall of enraged smoke. We put in an emergency call to the doctors at "Care". They told us there was no such thing as mental illness. Our machine suffered from the disabilities of old age and being unjustly treated through overloading, too long hours, lack of rest and other social injustices. We watched with fascination as transplant after transplant was performed. A reconditioned timer was installed. The donor was a coppertone machine that came to an untimely end. Foul play was suspected.



The motor and pump were replaced. There were similarly obscure circumstances surrounding their origin but so far no rejection symptoms are apparent. The house has duly noted "Care's" wild theories about the social and physical nature of our washing machine's problems but deep in our hearts we feel our machine has schizoid tendencies.

Should there be any further breakdowns we feel that the machine will have proved that it has failed to benefit from our treatment program. We have quietly gone about finding a good old wringer washer to replace it.

The vacuum cleaner was a classic example of catatonic state -- right out of the book. Two members of the household signed papers of involuntary committal and the house coordinator drove it straight to the "Care" hospital. Since none of us know anything about the various treatments available, we didn't enquire about electric shock or drug therapy. We left it all in the capable hands of those who know best. It all worked out too! Our vacuum was returned in operating condition and hasn't given us a moment's trouble since. That's the way we want our machines running -- old age, social conditions, etc., notwithstanding.

- Fran Phillips

Activities

Politics Night every Thursday at 8:00 p.m. at the Drop-In Center. All welcome.

Yoga most Fridays from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. in St. James Church gym. Phone Drop-In Centre (738-5177) for confirmation.

Films every Friday night at 8:00 p.m. at the Drop-In Center-trying to get Kommie Kids flicks to show.

Coffee with Valerie every Wed. from 10:00 a.m. on. Bring lunch and spend a day at MPA. "Molly and Cathy are importing exciting people from around the globe to talk to."

Len has put together a workshop in the basement. Tools are available for metal sculpture and woodwork.

Coco has posted a schedule in the basement for crafts activities. The crafts area is always available for pottery (we have a potter's wheel), sewing and leatherwork.

CARD & GOSSIP NIGHT

Sundays, 7:30 p.m. at the Drop-In Centre

MEETINGS

General Meeting

General Meetings are held every 3rd Wed. at 7:30 pm. (preceded by Pot Luck Meal)
October 18th
November 6th
November 29th
December 20th

Business Meeting

Held every Tuesday at noon. Locations vary.

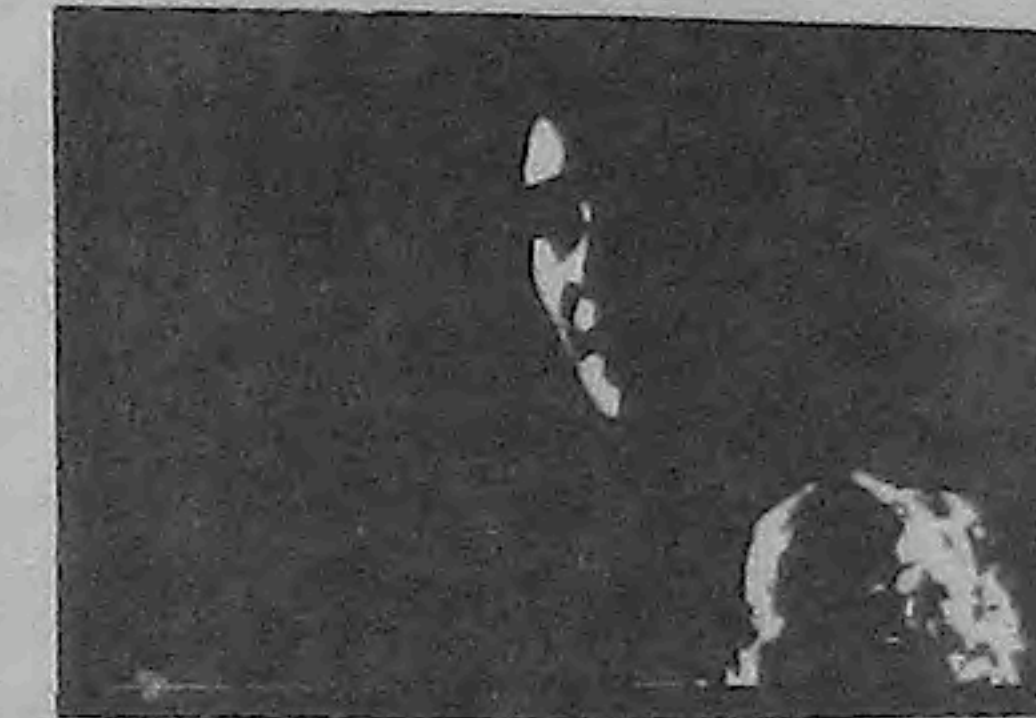
Activities Meeting

Every Monday, 1:00 p.m. at the Drop-In Centre.

Research Meeting

Time and place vary. Check Activities Board or phone in.

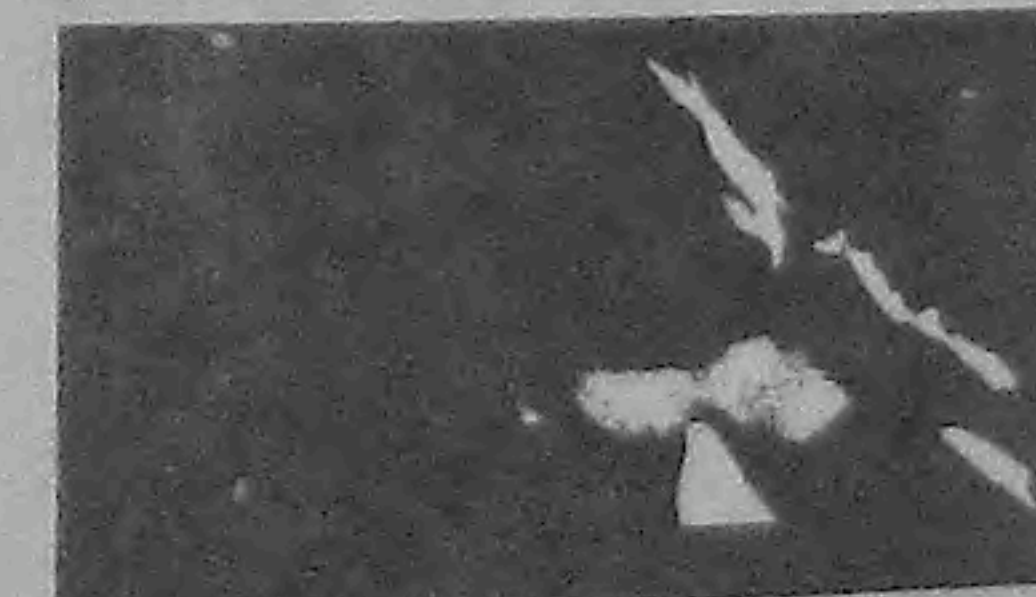
These meetings are open to everyone.



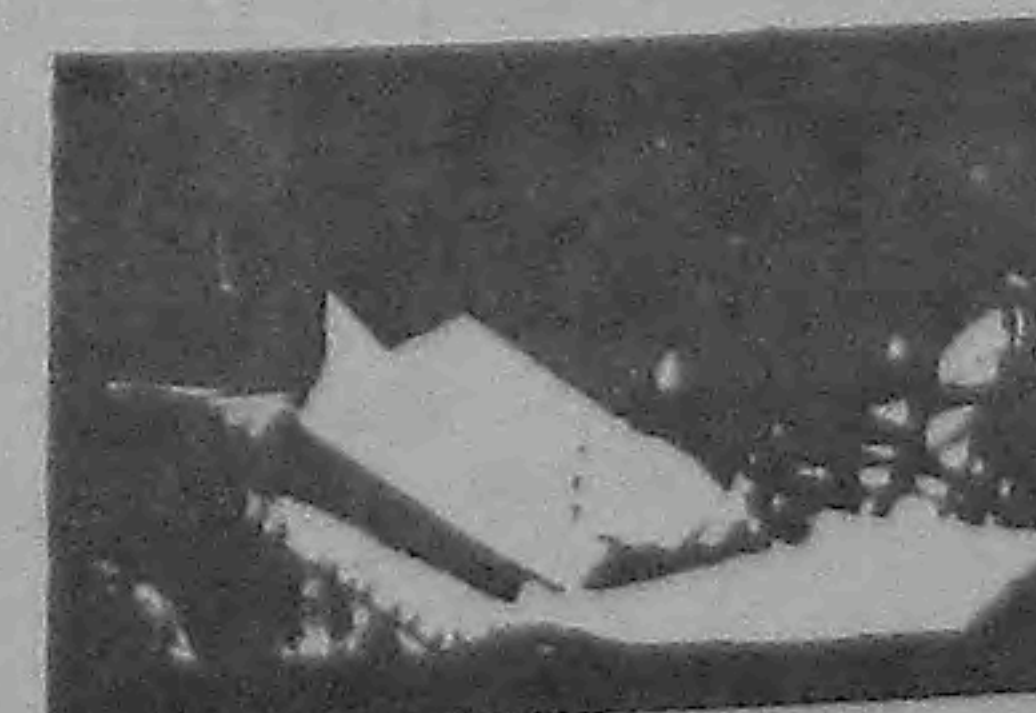
Laura...



Gerry...



Kathy...



Lanny...

The following is a list of committees at MPA. If you are interested in joining any of them--they are open and your help would be appreciated.

- Activities Committee
- Decorating Committee
- Election Committee
- Library Committee
- Newsletter Committee
- Phone Committee
- Research Committee
- Over 30's Committee

SONG NIGHT

A regular song night at MPA is being planned. Watch the Activities Board for announcements on it.



At the farm...

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MPA Benefit on Oct. 21st, 8:00-1:00 p.m.-a.m. at 4th & Trafalger. Admission is \$1.00 or by donation. For more info call Patty at the Drop-In Center.

At the Sept. 27th General Meeting, the following people were elected:

Laura Wilimovsky - Office Co-Ordinator

Dick Betts & Gerald Beraldi - Research Co-Ordinators

Dick Woodsworth - West End Co-Ordinator
(Dick was elected by the residents at the West End and ratified at the General Meeting.)

As at Sept. 30th, there are 2 positions open for co-ordinators. The definition of these positions will probably be determined at the MPA Re-Organization Conference.

Thomas Szasz speaking at UBC, Nov. 6 at 8:30 p.m. in Hebb Theatre. Tickets \$2.00 from the Dept. of Continuing Education. Write or call them for more info.

Filmsoc at UBC. Tickets for Sunday night films. Check with Cathy Batten at the Drop-In Centre.

Coffee Party on Fri. Oct 13th at St. James United Church, 10th & Trutch, from 1:00-3:00 p.m. All welcome.

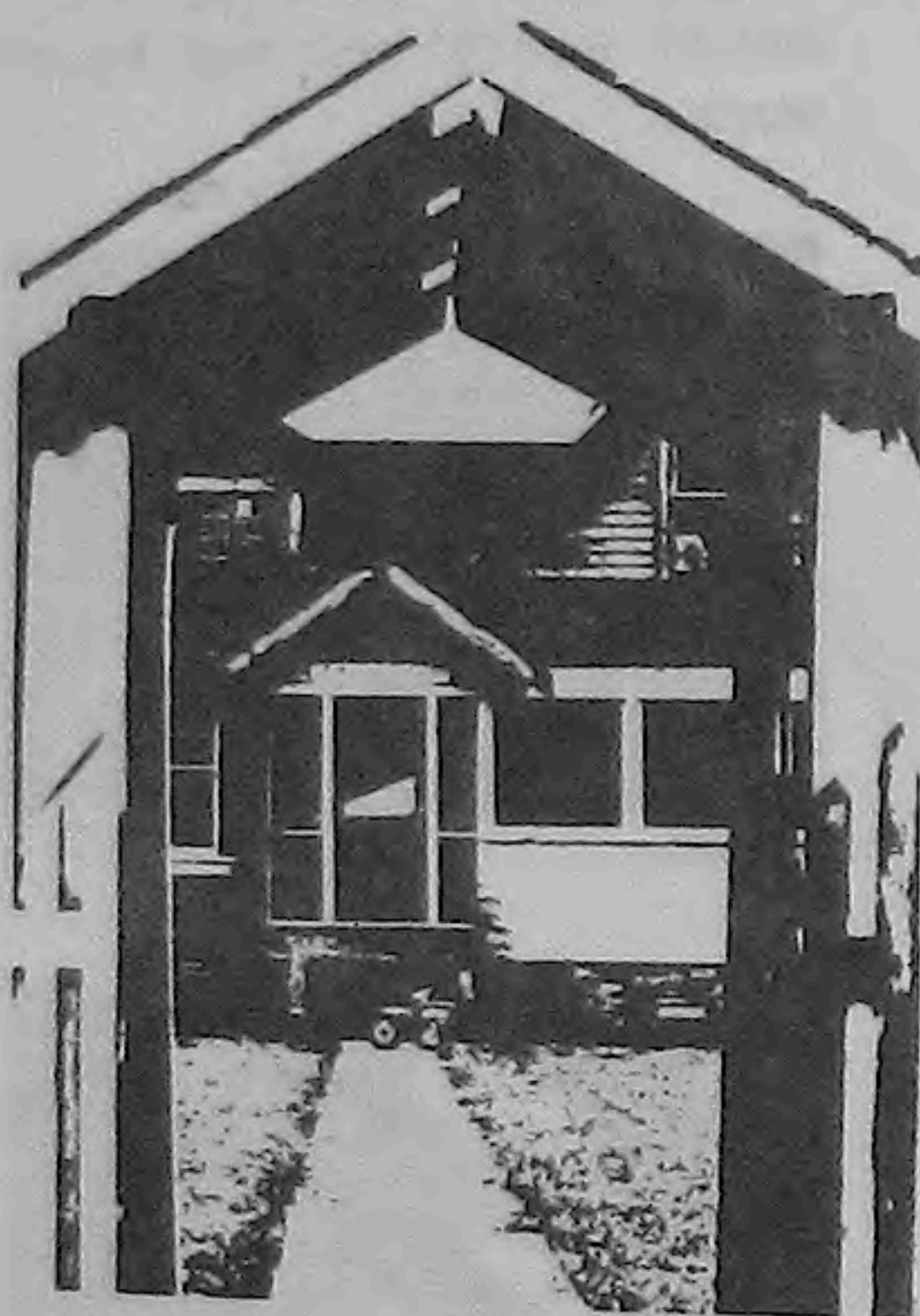
1982 W. 6th Ave., 732-8222
There are openings for 5 people at the West End Res.

East End Residence

369 E. 21st., 874-9422
There are a few openings here.

26942 - 108th Ave., 462-7232
The farm has space for quite a few people--especially for those who want to work hard at getting the farm going. (see p.16, Farm Report).

MPA signed a lease for Sept. 15th on a lovely, huge, 10 bedroom house where Patty and friends now reside. A really fine housewarming party was held Fri., Sept. 22nd.



NEW FARM ENTRANCE ...

MPA CONFERENCE

Come and change MPA!
redistribute the power!
Say what you want to see done!

We want to do something about the internal problems and feelings of discontent. We'll be holding a two-day conference at the drop-in centre Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 14 and 15. We plan to start at 11:00 in the morning on both days. We should be able to go through to the evening.

We'll split into small groups so all can have a say and express their ideas. Then we'll pool the ideas together in the large group and maybe work out some specific plans about how to re-structure all of MPA.

We want everyone who has shown any interest in MPA to attend. There are all sorts of new directions we could move in. The group can be changed so that anyone who has been

previously dissatisfied can find a home at MPA.

Bring your ideas about what is wrong with MPA and how it could be changed. Please attend for however much time you can manage during the weekend.

The times and dates again are:

Sat., Oct 14 at 11:00 a.m. through and,

Sun., Oct 15 at 11:00 a.m. through to the evening. Call the Drop-In Centre (738-5177) for more information.