

ERAP NEWSLETTER

451 Dudley St., Boston, Mass. 02119

November 8, 1965

CLEVELAND ANSWERS ATTACK

On Friday, October 24, the Cleveland Plain Dealer published an article claiming that students in SDS, SNCC, and YSA were beatniks, arrogant, and sloppy, as well as immoral. Alice Marcns, present chairman of the Cleveland community union, wrote this letter to protest the attack.

To Mr. Thomas Vail, Editor, Cleveland Plain Dealer:

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As editor of a paper I find that you allow your reporters to give one-sided and weighted pictures of the news.

The case that I find most predominate is the one-sided ideas on SDS, SNCC, and YSA (Cleveland Plain Dealer, Sun., Oct. 24). Of SNCC and YSA I can say nothing first hand. But I have known many of the young people associated with SDS in Cleveland, and I have met a few from other cities.

I do not find them:

1. Beatniks: a few of the fellos wear beards, does this make them slovenly? Some of the girls have long hair -- so what?
2. Arrogant -- I associated with people of this organization (SDS) freely, and have yet to be told - this is so -- you must accept what I say. Which is what you seem to say in your paper, Mr. Vail.

3. Sloppy -- Does one have to wear a suft or a cocktail dress to be neatly attired? Not in my book! !



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answer to attack - cont.

4. Orgies -- I have never seen them drunk or smoke weed or use the needle. As for their sex habits I really can't say since I don't sleep with any of them.

These are just a couple of things I find wrong with your paper Mr. Vail.

Your job is to publish the news -- both pro and con. It's not your job to say that these people -- some of which are students in different colleges -- are associated with communists, trouble-makers and draft dodgers, without the other side of the story.

Why is it so wrong for them to be vocal in their feelings on Viet Nam? It's supposed to be a free country and this is their prerogative. Where would this country be now if all of the pioneers hadn't voiced their opinions?

I feel that many young men do not want to go to Viet Nam but they don't want to go to jail so they join the army. They come home maimed, blinded and impaired for life able barely to exist on the stipend the Government feels is adequate for them to live on. This is supposed to be honorable, but is it? Is this a suitable way for our boys to be treated even if they do go to war Mr. Vail? Why do so many figure how to get deferments allowed for students if the war is so necessary -- why don't they fight? The poorer class has no choice, they can't go to college so they fight. These are things you know Mr. Vail but you don't publish this.

Mr. Eisenhower said in his speech "what do you know?" -- well what do we know. Maybe the reports from Viet Nam are warped like your news, Mr. Vail. Maybe the people we're fighting aren't communists. Maybe the vietnamese people don't really want us there maybe this War for Peace is not really a War for Peace but a war to benefit the businessman's pocket.

Do you believe also that they (SUN) should have kept quiet about

the West Abbey Rd. playground, Mr. Vail. I suppose you do then the city could have kept the money and used it for something more important like -- a new road or new office equipment or perhaps a new car for our dear city officials.

Do you feel they are wrong to encourage people to voice their feelings in this "People's" (?) country, Mr. Vail? Well, I too, feel that they shouldn't encourage the people to vote and fight for the candidate of their -- the People's -- choice to win.

These queries are not only in the minds of the responsible college student who has something besides dating, fraternities and sororities, and other trivialities on their minds. They are the queries on the minds of many of the older generation, too.

Give credit where credit is due, Mr. Vail if you aren't that big at least give the benefit of the doubt. Get out and get the news -- get both sides of the story. Hoping to see more news on both sides of the story in your paper,

Alice Aarons



War on Poverty - People and Politicians

This article was printed in the Newark Community Union News.

As you may know, the People's Action Group is the name of the Anti-Poverty program in our area. Poor people are supposed to be able to use the anti-poverty program to get some of the things we have been needing for so long -- and poor people are supposed to be running the program. But we have had a bitter fight to make sure that this really happens. And we have not yet won this fight. The PAG meets every month at 188 Badger Ave. If you have been to a meeting you know that they are sometimes hard to understand because of all the arguments that go on. But we must keep in our minds that there is a chance for poor people to win control and to get some of the money that President Johnson said they should be getting. We don't know if he meant that -- but we do mean it!

We have already handed in a fine proposal for a recreation center in our neighborhood. But now the higher-ups say that we will not get the proposal passed in Wash. unless we get ourselves a PAG Board of Trustees... We must elect poor people to this Board.

BOSTON

The law that set up the War on Poverty says that it should be run with "maximum feasible participation" of poor people. In Newark, people in Clinton Hill have been working with NCUP to make sure that they really have a say in what goes on -- they have been elected to the area War on Poverty board, and are writing up proposals for what they would like to see in their neighborhood.

Last week there was an article in the New York Times which said that the Newark politicians were complaining, because poor people had too much control over Newark's

War on Poverty. They said that the poor people could work for the program, but they weren't supposed to make any decisions about what the program did. They wanted the federal government to make that into a rule.

At the same time, the article said that there was talk about cutting down the amount of money the government allows for "community action programs". This kind of reaction is happening all over the country -- the politicians are finding out that if the people have some power, they can't keep telling them what to do.

In Boston this summer, there were elections for neighborhood War on Poverty boards. People from the Dudley Street Action Center participated in those elections, and people were elected who really had ideas about letting the whole neighborhood plan what to do with War on Poverty money.

But the people the Mayor appointed to be on the City Board didn't give the people in the neighborhoods any helpful information to help draw up plans. Now we've found out that they have submitted to Washington a plan which would give control of all the War on Poverty money spent in Boston to

BOSTON WAR ON POVERTY- continued

this city board- that would mean that none of the neighborhood groups could set up any programs that this board didn't approve. They say that's OK, because there are some poor people on the city board- but they are outnumbered by people the Mayor appointed!

The plan completely by-passes the nice "democratic structure" they set-up. They didn't even let the neighborhood boards see it until it was already in Washington.

People in the neighborhoods are getting ready to protest this plan. They are writing up their own proposals, to get them to Washington before this plan is adopted, since the plan says no new money can come into Boston for a year after it is passed.

In Boston and in Newark, we are fighting to make the War on Poverty live up to what it says- to keep the politicians from taking it over and making it just another "agency" coming into poor neighborhoods and telling the people what to do.

On the Welfare System

by Mary Murphy

The theory behind A.D.C. (Aid to Dependent Children) is a good sound one. It is beneficial not only to the recipient, but also to the Society as a whole, which is America. In our culture, and possibly all educated cultures, the family unit is the basis for a strong, stable and productive society. And the country definitely reflects the weakness of that family situation.

And because of this knowledge there come about a specific branch of Welfare to aid dependent children with financial assistance and more, to the mother of these children, to enable her to discharge her grave responsibility to her fullest capacity. In doing so, she serves a two-fold purpose: (1) she insures the country of productive,

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self-reliant, self-supporting citizens; (2) the mother is fulfilling her most important and satisfying role. Therefore, she is a more useful and productive citizen herself- (Happiness is what makes America). This is the beautiful, sound theory of A.D.C. The hypocrisy is that it is only theory not reality.

The reason for this is simple enough: without the proper tools one cannot perform well, if at all. Money is the tool of motherhood - money that buys material goods for the child's welfare, food for his growth, housing for his safety and emotional security; leisure money for his educational needs and feeling of self-esteem. Family life is that which gives the future generation a code of value to live by. The values which this country was built on cannot be instilled in children of welfare recipients. For children learn by imitation. Without tools, I cannot instill respect, justice, integrity, self-esteem - just as the farmers cannot plow without a plow and the doctor cannot operate without instruments. And people in these and other professions would not perform without adequate payment, nor would they be expected to.

To a mother, payment is seeing her children grow straight, strong, and happily. And some unharassed time to spend with them which comes from the security of having an adequate and stable income.

M.A.W. (Mothers for Adequate Welfare) is an association which is hoping to put into the hands of mothers the proper tools with which to mold the next generations of citizens by petitioning the welfare institutions to see how inadequate our equipment is.

M.A.W. is not a group of mothers turned storm troopers; but law-abiding citizens who made a tragic error in picking a life-long mate, and now are paying the price and taking their punishment through their most vulnerable spot-- their children. We all know that it is rehabilitation, not punishment, that cures.

This is what Boston mothers

welfare, cont.

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on welfare pay: higher rent budgets, leisure money for children, transportation money, phone call allowances, more clothing allowances for easier access to material goods, and an increase in the family food budget. When and only when these items are obtained will we begin to see a change in welfare. Until then we might as well expect more welfare clients and less good results, because when there are not adequate tools, logically it should follow that adequate performance will be had. But I do think it is a shame that themmothers have to see that welfare is run properly when the social workers are paid for just such work. So with the gratefully accepted help of the students we will make welfare into a beneficial institution.

POEMS by Yvonne Ruelas, Boston

crying

In a shabby house and listen to the crickets chearps

hear I sit in a shabby house and listen to the crickets chearps and my faucet is leaking and the children is asleep and I am left alone to sit out the long night waitin to hear a baby cry, I can't sleep because I know that soon he will wake up and I have to fix a milk bottle I am now concentrating on the unpaid bills and the due gas bill, today was the deadline to be in the cold but so far nothing has happen, tomorrow I will sit in the cold and the children will be cold and my heart will be broken, I will be crying but they wont see me because I will be crying in the inside, and my heart will be saying a prayer that soon the bill will be paid, I will be crying because tomorrow my child will go to a shabby school and the lesson will be old and wadie add she will think that she is smart and the teacher likes her and I will cry again, because she is so sweet and unwise, tomorrow I will take a walk and look at the running waters by the lake and enjoy myself because I know the lake wont have to cry like I do, it wont be promised love and money and happiness, it has everything the stillness, the calmness of the waves, its smarter than me, I have to cry, and hope and pray maybe and know their is no tomorrow of calmness

people

people lots of people, things different things, talk, not about their troubles, about mine I see alot of things, more things, much more things I see clear for the first time I know how bad off I am, I feel it, I still feel it, more and more, I hear things not what I have been hearing, everything looks good but not on my side, everybody goes places different places have fun, but not the kind I am use to, good wine, good booze, good eats, good places, good cloths, good money, plenty money, said to me I am all right, I still feel something it hurts, real bad, but I still here I am doing fine, but I see different thing, good things I dont have, I hear I am not happy with this, but still they have it, not letting it go, cant seem to do without, now I am thinking; really thinking, where am I, is it true, what they say, is the old technique coming back, what is it, is it people?

Boston staff

People on the Boston project have just been making some changes in staff living arrangements, which grew out of a discussion about what it means for an "organizer" to make a long-term commitment to the neighborhood.

The decision made was for the staff, which now lives in two big apartments, to split up into groups of twos and threes and take other apartments, or move in with people in the community.

It was felt that if the student organizers can have a long-term role in the community, they have to become a part of the community--the place where they live in Roxbury has to be their home. We found that in Boston, the big apartments with six or eight people each were so crowded, chaotic, public, messy, etc., etc., that people didn't feel that they had any place to go to relax.

Also, the place where you lived was "the project"--so you felt like you were (or should be) organizing all the time. The result of this all was to put so much pressure on people that they couldn't work well any of the time, and thought a lot about leaving the "project"--not because they wanted to stop organizing, but because they wanted to get out of that damn house.

There is another aspect to the whole thing, in terms of the relationship of the staff to the community. To be part of the neighborhood, some people felt that you should live like the other people in the neighborhood. This is especially important from the point of view of how people participate in the project. The way it was before, community people worked hard and thought about what the project was doing, but the real line that set off the staff from the others was the fact of living together.

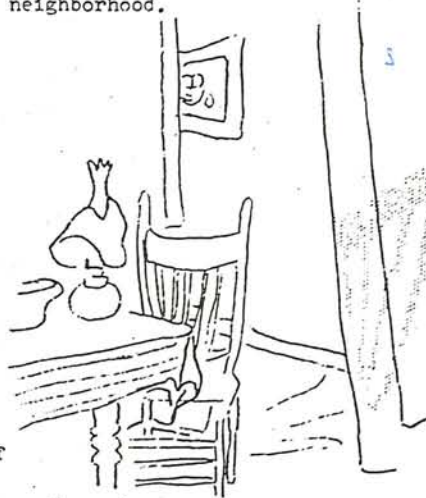
This meant that "the project" and the decisions made were much more accessible to the student staff than to the other people in the community--you could decide things

over dinner, and not wait to call a formal meeting, and go to the trouble of getting everyone together. If people live in all different places, then decisions can only be made when we decide to make decisions, and everyone will have a more or less equal chance of being there.

The same thing applies, not only to making decisions, but to the sense of community that exists around a project--people felt that the students, living together in a group, based their community partly on that shared experience, so that full participation in it was very much harder for someone who could not live "on the project."

One real problem involved in the feeling of community which we are trying to create, is how to keep this community an open thing, and not make it the basis for excluding people who are not a part of it. Living as we have, differently and separately from the rest of the people in the community, tended to create this closed kind of community.

We'd like to hear what other projects think about these ideas--if they have found any of the same problems in their attempts to work out a real and healthy place for themselves in the neighborhood.



... From Cairo

Cairo. The silent, forgotten project is gasping its last breath. George Graham, who has been with the project since its founding, is pulling out. That leaves two staff members; I am down here on the Antioch work/study program and will be pulling out to return to college; the other is going to the ERAP national conference, where, if he doesn't receive support, he will quit Cairo and go on to another project. Thus Freedom House will close. We cannot let this happen. At this time we are holding in abeyance the initiation of all new projects because we cannot handle the situation alone. We are stranded. The only things that we can handle under these conditions are personal welfare and social security problems, police complaints, and general problems brought up by the people. We are directionless.

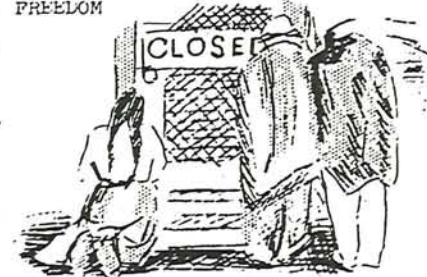
We have the impression down here that the general consensus of ERAP opinion would have us close down. We cannot. Let me justify our existence and why we must continue. Freedom House is the sole flicker of freedom flashing in this town. We cannot let this ember die. Freedom House is a festering, latent sore in the side of the establishment which is dedicated to the absolute preservation of the status quo. This is the most southern of all ERAP projects; thus the establishment is more rigid than elsewhere and completely dominated by the white psyche. As a cop who picked me up told me, "We got the worst bunch of niggers in the whole world; most of them are on welfare and the rest are no good."

Unemployment is high, about ten times the stated national average, and, as is to be expected, the Negro is the last hired and first fired.

There is much police brutality. It is, in fact, incredible how ruthlessly and inhumanly these neo-Neanderthals approach their work.

The white community is secure. It supports the establishment which in return supports them. Thus, to make any gains we will have to buck the establishment all the way down the line. This we can do! We can pressure and pressure, subtly (i.e. building a true community spirit of the poor people which we are working towards now) or overtly (demonstrations). We have a lawyer in Chicago who is willing to set up an assistant down here to take complaints if we can get the people to complain.

And lastly, let us not be forgotten that this is a southern town. The psychological effect of having a progressive town on the borders of the South would crack the impenetrable facade of hate and fear, and would even make Wallace wonder if Alabama was safe. The following is a quote from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch by a Klavern leader, "Cairo is the Klan's strong point in Illinois." They need it. The establishment is scared. The secure whites who drive by with their windows up from white enclave to white enclave are scared. The poor Negro has hope. But this hope is becoming cynical hope because it is about to be snatched away from them. We cannot fail. If anyone is willing to grow a little hungrier, a little colder, a little dirtier--to fight for freedom a little harder, please come down. The people of Cairo need us. It is imperative. Lets knock the hell out of the establishment. Let's let them know that we are alive and kicking, and not to be laughed down. Democracy not hypocrisy. FREELOM



Now they lived part of org/proc (6)

Also Chicago (6)

ERAP and the NEWSLETTER ⁸

ERAP projects, like SDS chapters, often face the criticism that they are not seriously interested in changing things, that they are not consciously political. Projects do move slowly and uncertainly but not, I think, because of lack of serious commitment.

Rather, it seems to me that many ERAP people don't think carefully enough about what changes they want, and expect to accomplish. My argument is not that we don't have a participatory blueprint for the future: it is that we don't have much of an idea of what day-to-day "organizing" means in terms of what specifically will come of it. Is all the work simply trying to find or create radicals -- to build a movement pure and simple -- or is it to achieve definite short-run gains? (I don't think the two are as necessarily connected as most ERAP people seem to think.)

Anyway, I should explain how I arrived at this theory. We in Boston don't get many articles for the ERAP newsletter. One initial response to this is to consider abolishing the newsletter entirely: if people don't see a need for it, why continue to put it out?

The answer is that if the Newsletter didn't exist it would have to be invented. People before long would complain about the lack of communication between projects and would decide to have a Newsletter to correct this. But what do you do if you have a newsletter and there still isn't enough communication because nobody sends things in?

One reply is that you badger people. This has been done ad infinitum. Another is that you write stuff yourself. This we're doing. A third is that you try to figure out why people don't send stuff in. Then you bring that problem out in the open and discuss it.

Now, my analysis is fairly simple, maybe because I'm not really in a position to know. I think that if people knew what they wanted to find out from a newsletter they'd write things, as this reciprocal obligation is basic to any community. If they knew fairly specifically what they were trying to do and why they could or couldn't do it, they'd want to compare notes -- they'd know what they wanted from a newsletter. The lack of this is why I wonder if people think carefully about their goals and strategy.

There are a couple of possible answers to this argument. One is that the Newsletter doesn't serve that function: things like Liberation (with Hayden's article on the War on Poverty) and Studies on the Left do it. But then what function does the Newsletter serve? Another is that people are too busy with what they're doing to write and read as much as they should. This may be an adequate description of what is, but does it describe

cont'd next p.

-- a discussion from Boston --

newsletter, cont ⁹

what should be? A third answer might be that things happen slowly and there just isn't that much to write about. My only response to this is that people should begin to think about why things happen slowly and whether this is good or bad, inevitable or changeable.

To sum up by an example: the Hoboken people, for instance, seem to be doing different kinds of things partly because their ideas of possible short-term goals are different. The kind of newsletter they might want to see would differ from one Chicago or Cleveland might want.

People can say "we just don't have time to think about the Newsletter", but that in one sense is to say that there isn't time to think about other ERAP projects at all. Yet I think that most people's ideas of what they're doing demand some kind of national link-up if they're going to have broad political meaning at all. I think the problem is that people haven't discussed and clarified what their day-to-day goals are and this don't see the relevance of talking to other ERAP projects except as friends.

Other opinions welcome.

John Case
Newsletter staff